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The Upper Currents

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SUMMER GATHERING.
THE TRANSFIGURED LIFE.
IN PERFECT PEACE.
TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW.

Thomas Y. Crowell & Company
New York

The Upper Currents

BY

J. R. MILLER, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "SILENT TIMES," "BUILDING OF CHARACTER," "BESIDE THE STILL WATERS," ETC.

"A man's reach should exceed his grasp
Or what is Heaven for?"

—BROWNING

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PREFACE

THESE *chapters contain simple lessons, intended to incite to braver, stronger, truer living. We live well only when down here on earthly levels we catch the breath of heaven and are impelled toward things that are worth while. To be moved only by the lower earthly currents is to miss all that is best in life.*

J. R. M.

Philadelphia, U. S. A.

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Catching the Upper Currents

Up, my drowsing eyes!
Up, my sinking heart!
Up to Jesus Christ arise!
Claim your part
In all raptures of the skies!

Yet a little while,
Yet a little way,
Saints shall reap and rest and smile
All the day:
Up! let's trudge another mile!

—Christina Rossetti

CHAPTER FIRST

Catching the Upper Currents

EARTH always needs heaven. Without sunshine and rain no plant will live or grow. Human lives need God; not to get his blessing is to shrivel and perish. It is indeed the love of God that this poor old world needs. Yet, though this love breathes everywhere, there are those who miss it, who get none of it into their lives, and then wonder why they are not happy.

"It is love that thou lackest, thou poor old world.
Who shall make thy love hot for thee, frozen old world?
Thou art not happy as thou mightest be,
For the love of dear Jesus is little in thee."

Doctor Peabody, in one of his inspiring talks to the students at Harvard, draws a picture of a vessel lying becalmed in a glassy sea. There is not a breath of air to fill a sail. While the

men wait and watch, however, they notice that all at once the little pennant far up on the mast-head begins to stir and lift. There is not a ripple on the water, nor the faintest moving of the air on the deck ; but when they see the pennant stirring they know that there is a wind rising in the higher air, and they quickly spread their upper sails to catch it. Instantly the vessel begins to move under the power of the higher currents, while on the surface of the water there is still a dead calm.

In life there are lower and higher currents. Too many set only the lower sails and catch only the winds which blow along on earthly levels. But there also are winds which blow down from the mountains of God. It would be an unspeakable gain to us all if our lives fell more under the influence of these upper currents. We would be wise if we so adjusted our relations with others that all our days we should be under the sway of the good, the worthy, the pure-hearted, the heavenly.

Then as their friends we should seek ever to bring into the lives of others only the highest,

the most uplifting and inspiring, the most wholesome and enriching influences. We should aim always so to live Christ that the Christ in us shall become the very breath of God to every one whose life we touch. If we do not we are living below our possibilities in the character and reach of our influence. There are many ways of helping others. We can bring them bread if they are hungry, garments to wear and fuel for their fire if they are cold, money to pay their debts if they are in need, or medicines and care if they are sick. We can brighten a dull hour for them by our presence if they are lonely, and warm their hearts by our compassion if they are sorrowing. But there are better ways of helping. George Macdonald says, "If, instead of a gem, or even a flower, we should cast the gift of a lovely thought into the heart of a friend, that would be giving as the angels give." There are friendships in which this kind of love is given by one to the other. Great thoughts, sweet, inspiring, cheering thoughts, have been put into the heart to bless, enrich, and transform the life.

It was such a friendship as this of which Charles Kingsley spoke when, in giving the secret of his own rich life, he said, "I had a friend." If that friend had ministered to him only in lower and earthly ways, he would never have been lifted up into the sublime reaches of character which he attained. But she was not content to please him in the light and trivial ways which are the only charm of too many friendships. She was not satisfied to walk with him as his companion in the dusty paths of earthly toil and care. She brought into his life lovely thoughts, visions of radiant character, glimpses of lofty heights, and incited him continually toward whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely.

That is the kind of friend we should seek to have and to be. No other conception of friendship's ministry is worthy of an immortal life. Yet are there many friendships which realize this lofty ideal? Are there many who seek the higher, better things either for their friends or themselves? Are there many whose life is the very wind of heaven blowing upon all who come

within the circle of their influence? Yet nothing else is really worthy in a friend. He who comes to us in this sacred relation should always bring a breath of heaven's life down to us. He should touch our life on its spiritual side. There are influences enough to call out the earthly side of our nature. The world's fascinations play about us continually. Our eyes see only material things, and, therefore, material things make strong appeal to our taste, our feeling, our desire. Many of the friends, too, who come into our lives minister to us only along earthly levels.

Two young people sit together for an evening, and not a word is said by either which starts in the other a thought above the range of the material. The conversation runs on in neighborhood gossip, trivial personalities, criticisms of people, compliments, bits of playful humor, but with not one serious word in it all. In marriage two lives are united and move on together, perhaps in ideal fashion, blending in love, in interest, in fellowship, in care, in self-denial, in sorrow. Each exerts over the other a strong,

transforming influence. They give much pleasure the one to the other in all love's tender and helpful ways. But too often there is a whole great section of each life which is never entered nor touched by the other. As it were, these two are dwelling in a house with lower and upper stories. In the lower apartments is found all that belongs to the physical and earthly life. In the upper apartments are the higher things, things of the mind, of the spirit. But our friends always stay downstairs and never go up into the rooms where thought and reason and hope and faith hold their court. It is a pity that friendship and love should miss so much, for it is only in the upper ranges that the things which are worth while are found.

At the Beautiful Gate of the temple a beggar sat one day, asking alms of those who entered the sacred place. Peter and John were passing in and the poor man reached out his hand, hoping to receive a little money. Peter said to him, however, "Silver and gold have I none; but what I have that give I thee." Then he bade the man arise, and, giving him his hand,

helped him to get up. Peter was a far better friend to this man than if he had given him a coin. This would only have provided for a few hours more of the poor life he was now living, leaving him still in the same condition as before. Peter brought healing down into the man's crippled body and restored him again to strength. He need not beg of others any more, for now that he was healed he was able to earn his own bread.

The best and truest help we can give to others is not mere present gratification, but strength, courage, and cheer, that they may rise into nobler, worthier life, and go on continually with new energy and hope. It may be easier, when you find one in need through his own indolence, to give him money to supply his wants, than to help him into a position in which he will learn to earn his own bread. It may be easier, but after you have provided for his necessities for a time, short or long, you leave him just where you found him, in poverty, with no more power than before to care for himself. But if you have ignored his plea for alms and,

instead, have taught him to work, and inspired him to do it, you have lifted him above the need of asking charity and have set his feet in the path toward manhood.

It may be easier to walk along low levels with your friend, adapting yourself to his trivial ways of thought and conversation, not trying to lift him up to anything better. But in so doing you are not true to him. Try to lead his steps upward, toward the rugged hills, whence he shall get wider visions. Tempt him with the sweets of nobler life and seek to woo him to enter with you into its enjoyment. It takes tact and patience to get one who has never learned to read good books, to begin to read such books, but it is worth while to do it at whatever cost. It is not easy to teach one used only to a life of earthly commonplaces to care for things that are unseen and eternal, but in no other way can we do others such real, enduring good as by seeking to lift them.

That is the kind of friendship Christ shows to us. He came from heaven, down into earth's lowest places, to exalt us to worthy life and

eternal blessedness. We begin to be Christlike friends to others only when we do for them what Christ has done and is ever doing for us.

"*Where'er a noble deed is wrought;*
Where'er is spoken a noble thought;
Our hearts, in glad surprise,
To higher levels rise.

"*The tidal wave of deeper souls*
Into our inmost being rolls,
And lifts us unawares
Out of all meaner cares.

"*Honor to those whose words or deeds*
Thus help us in our daily needs
And by their overflow
Raise us from what is low."

"In the Beginning God"

My bark is wafted to the strand
By breath divine ;
And on the helm there rests a hand
Other than mine.

One who has known in storms to sail
I have on board ;
Above the raging of the gale
I hear my Lord.

Safe to the land—safe to the land,
The end is this ;
And then with him go hand in hand
Far into bliss.

—Dean Alford.

CHAPTER SECOND

"In the Beginning God"

NO life can be complete, however much of beauty it may have in it, which leaves out God. No path can be a safe one, however sheltered it may seem, in which God is not leading us. We never can find our way home unless we are guided from heaven. We should make sure that, whatever other friends we have, we have Jesus Christ.

The first words in the Bible very strikingly tell us the place that God should have in every life —"In the beginning God." It is no wresting of the Scriptures to take these words, apart from their connection, as presenting the sublimest truth in all the range of thinking. They carry us back into the eternal past, before there was aught else but God. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,

even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

This is the meaning of the words as they stand thus picturesquely at the beginning of the Bible. But there is also a fitness in considering the words in another sense. Not only was God before all things and the Author of all creation, but he should be given a place at the beginning of everything. "In the beginning God" should be the watchword of all life. We belong to God and should recognize his ownership by voluntarily giving ourselves to him. This is the initial act of every true consecration. When we have done this God stands at the beginning of everything for us. We enthrone him in our heart, giving him our supreme affection. We look to him as Lord, waiting at every step for his command. We trust him as our Father, turning with every want to him. Thus in all our personal life God is first, if we are living in true relations to him.

Then there are special applications. The words should be written over the gateway of

every new day—"In the beginning God." God's face should be the first we see in the morning when we open our eyes. His voice should be the first we hear with its benediction of love and grace. He should be the first to whom we speak, lifting up our hearts in praise and in supplication for guidance and blessing. Henry Vaughan's quaint lines put well the lesson:

When first thy eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
To do the like; our bodies but forerun
The spirit's duty. True hearts spread and heave
Unto their God, as flowers do to the sun.
Give him thy first thoughts then; so shalt thou keep
Him company all day, and in him sleep.

Yet never sleep the sun up; prayer should
Dawn with the day. There are set, awful hours
'Twixt heaven, and us. The manna was not good
After sunrising; far day sullies flowers.
Rise to prevent the sun; sleep doth sins glut,
And heaven's gate opens, when this world's is shut.

Walk with thy fellow-creatures: note the hush
And whisperings among them. Not a spring

Or leaf but hath his morning hymn; each bush
And oak doth know I AM. Canst thou not sing?
Oh, leave thy cares and follies! go this way
And thou art sure to prosper all the day.

A day with God truly at its beginning cannot but be a prosperous day. It may not be easy. It may not be cloudless. Its burdens may be heavy. Its tasks may be hard. It may have its crosses, its sorrows, its tears. But nothing can go really wrong with our life if we have truly put it into God's hands in the morning.

Yet there are people who never pray. They rise from their bed in the morning, after enjoying a night's protection, and after receiving blessings from God in sleep, and never say a word nor have an emotion of gratitude. They go out into a new day, with its wilderness of unrevealed experiences, not knowing what they are to meet, through what dangers they must pass, and yet never whisper a prayer for guidance, for help, for blessing. How can anyone who thus begins his day expect all things to go well with him? A prayerless day is a day of peril. One writes:

"In the Beginning God"

The sunlight streaming o'er my temple gate
With rays beguiling, soft, and fair,
Made me at dawn neglect until too late
To bar it with the wonted prayer.

Two fair-clad robbers, Duty and Delight,
Won entrance and engaged my mind,
While dark, unnoticed, and in rags bedight,
Worry and Folly crept behind.

To-night there's ruin in my Holy Place,
Its vessels gone, its treasures spent—
Contentment, faith, and every hard-won grace
Displaced and spoiled. Lord, I repent.

A prayerless day never can be anything but a day of loss and failure. It may not seem so. Business may be prosperous as ever. The table may be bountifully spread. God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." But however happy a day may seem to be, if it lacks heaven's benediction it is a sad day.

One writes, "We need to lift our eyes each morning to the perfect standard, and to test our lives each night by the divine character. And when this shows us forthwith our own crookedness and selfishness, and convicts us of

evil, we need to ask humbly for daily pardon. What sensitive Christian could bear to go twenty-four hours unforgiven? So also, amid the tumult and dazzle of the busy world, we need to drink in daily quietness from the fountain of the peace of God. Under the strain of our daily temptations we are driven back on Christ's unseen grace and strength. Thus every fresh trial and worry and failure becomes to the Christian a fresh summons which calls him to prayer."

If we would have our days bright and beautiful and full of peace, we need only to start at God's feet and to keep him first in our life through all the day to its close. We have it in one of the Psalms—"I have set Jehovah always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

"Begin each morning with a talk to God
And ask for your divine inheritance
Of usefulness, contentment, and success.
Resign all fear, all doubt, and all despair.
The stars doubt not, and they are undismayed,
Though whirled through space for countless centuries

And told not why or wherefore; and the sea
With everlasting ebb and flow obeys
And leaves the purpose with the Unseen Cause.
The star sheds radiance on a million worlds,
The sea is prodigal with waves; and yet
No lustre from the star is lost, and not
One drop is missing from the ocean's tides.
O brother to the star and sea, know all
God's opulence is held in trust for those
Who wait serenely while they work in faith."

The words are peculiarly fitting also for a birthday motto, or for the opening of a new year. We cannot see into the year's life, to know what it may hold for us, but we need not care to know. Faith is better than sight. Walking with God in the dark is safer than walking alone in the light. There is something very suggestive in the way the Christian world designates the years, Anno Domini, "In the year of our Lord." The birth of Jesus Christ introduced a new era. Time before that is not counted—the only years that it is worth while to record are the years since Christ came. We should strive, therefore, to make each year indeed a year of our Lord.

We can do this by giving Christ his true place at the beginning and then by having him in all our life throughout the year.

But the mere writing of the legend, "In the year of our Lord," on our letter sheets and at the head of our business papers, will not itself consecrate the year. A man bought an illuminated scroll, neatly framed, and brought it home. On it were the words, "God Bless Our Home." It was hung up in the dining-room and was an ornament to the room. But somehow it did not seem to bring the blessing. The home continued to be full of wrangling and strife and all manner of ill nature. There was no more love after the scroll was hung up than before. An illuminated motto will not sweeten a home nor bring good into it. Neither will the writing of Anno Domini—"In the year of our Lord"—over a year make it beautiful, or cast any glory upon it. We make it truly a year of the Lord only by giving Christ the first place in all its life.

He must be first in our business. This means that we must conduct the business as his, not

as our own. We must do it according to the principles of righteousness and truth which he has laid down, making every transaction as holy as a prayer or a sacrament.

He must be first, also, in our personal life. It is possible to carry on a business honestly, on principles ethically Christian, and yet not to have God in the place which belongs to him. He wants our life first, before our business. "Not yours, but you," is the claim he makes. "In the beginning God," as our motto for a new year, means God enthroned in our heart and filling all our life.

St. Paul expressed the truth when he said, "To me to live is Christ." He held up the same ideal also when he exhorted, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." We need to look to our own personal life, that there God may always be first. Then there will be no failure in the things we do. If we love God supremely we may do what we will.

In all the details of our plans, dreams, aspirations, and hopes this should be the motto—

"In the beginning God." No friendship should be formed unless it have the divine approval and unless God be its cementing bond. No ambition should be cherished unless the honor of God be its goal. No new work should be undertaken unless in it God has the first place. There is a promise that if we acknowledge him in all our ways he will direct our paths. If only we give God his place at the beginning of everything, all our life will be blessed.

One of Frances Ridley Havergal's poems tells us of an Aeolian harp which a friend sent with a letter describing the wonderful sweetness of its tones. Miss Havergal took the harp and thrummed its seven strings, but there were no thrilling strains, only common music. She read the letter again and found instructions which she had overlooked at first. Then she raised the window and put the harp under the sash. Now the wind swept over the strings and the room was filled with melodious strains which no fingers of man could have produced. Only when the breath of heaven blew upon

the harp could its marvellous music be brought out.

The human soul is such a harp. Human fingers call out much that is lovely and sweet, but it is only when its chords are swept by the breath of heaven, by the Holy Spirit, that its noblest music is called out.

When Prayer is not the Duty

Bow thy head and pray,
That while thy brother starves to-day,
Thou mayest not eat thy bread at ease:
Pray that no health or wealth or peace
May lull thy soul while the world lies
Suffering, and claims thy sacrifice;
Praise not, while others weep, that thou
Hast never groaned with anguished brow;
Praise not thy sins have pardon found,
While others sink, in darkness drowned;
Canst thou give thanks, while others nigh,
Outcast and lost, curse God and die?

—PRISCILLA LEONARD.

CHAPTER THIRD

When Prayer is not the Duty

THERE are many commands to pray. We are taught in everything to make our requests known to God. We are bidden to be instant in prayer, to cast our burden on the Lord. Yet prayer is not all of a religious life. Committing our way unto the Lord, rolling it upon him, does not absolve us from duty. There are prayers of indolence and prayers of selfishness, and with neither of these prayers is God pleased.

Prayer, then, is not always the duty of the hour. It would seem that once Moses was rebuked for continuing in prayer. It was when the Hebrews were shut in beside the Red Sea, with Pharaoh's army pressing behind them. "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Clearly, duty for Moses that moment was not

to stay on his knees, crying to God for deliverance and help. Rather it was to cease praying, to rise up and lead the people forward. We are commanded to wait for the Lord, but there is an over-waiting which loses the blessing. Faith is not all reclining trust; part of it always is action. To trust and do nothing will win no victories. We must rise from our praying and go forward.

There are many common illustrations of this truth. Your neighbor is in some trouble. You hear of it, and, being a believer in prayer, you go to your place of devotion and plead that God would send him the help that is needed. Almost certainly, however, prayer is not the duty in this case. Rather it is to cease your supplication and go quickly to your neighbor to do for him what he needs. If a friend is taken suddenly very ill, or is injured in an accident, your duty is not to go to your closet and spend a season in prayer for him, but to hasten for a physician. A city missionary tells of an experience in London. He was hurrying on his rounds one bitter January day, when he heard cries of

little children in a house he was passing. He listened for a moment and knocked at the door, but no one answered his knocking. Then he opened the door and went in. He found himself in a miserable apartment, without furniture, without fire. In one corner, on a pile of straw, lay a woman, dead, with two children clinging to her and crying piteously.

At a moment's glance the missionary saw the sadness of the case, and, falling upon his knees, began to call upon God. He believed in prayer, and pleaded with intense earnestness that heaven would send help to these orphaned children in their great distress. So importunate did he become in his pleading that he spoke rashly, and said: "O God, send thine angel to care for these poor, motherless children. Send at once, or my faith this instant dies." Immediately he seemed to hear, plainly and clearly, as if a divine voice were speaking to him, the words, "Thou art mine angel; for this very purpose did I send thee here." He saw now that he had no right to ask God to send any other messenger to minister to these needy little ones, that

prayer was but a waste of God's time, and presumptuous. Taking the children by the hand, he quickly led them to a place of shelter, where they were cared for.

Sometimes when we pray we draw a little narrow circle about ourselves. We ask only for health, happiness, and comforts for our own lives, giving no thought to the world of suffering, sorrow, and need outside. Such prayers do not rise to heaven as incense. There is a legend of one who prayed thus.

"*But as he prayed, lo! at his side*
Stood the thorn-crowned Christ, and sighed:
'O blind disciple—came I then
To bless the selfishness of men?
Thou asketh health, amidst the cry
Of human strain and agony;
Thou askest peace, while all around
Trouble bows thousands to the ground:
Thou askest life for thine and thee,
While others die; thou thankest me
For gifts, for pardon, for success,
For thine own narrow happiness.'"

It is always right to pray for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, but if we only pray

and do nothing to set forward the cause for which we plead, our praying does not please God. We must be ready always to do with our own hand that which we ask God to do. When God desires to help, bless, deliver, or save a man he usually sends another man to do it. Ordinarily, when God puts it into our hearts to desire to do good to some one, we are the messengers he would send with the blessing. Our aspirations are first inspirations. We may pray God to give help, but we must be ready at once to rise and go ourselves with the help.

Far more than we realize it does God wish us to answer our own prayers. If we have plenty, and hear of one who is hungry, our duty is not to pray for him, asking God to send him bread, or to incline some good man to supply his wants; rather our duty is to hasten to share our plenty with him. It is little less than mockery to ask that help be sent from heaven or by some divine agency, to one in need, when we have in our own hands that which would meet and supply the need. God gave us our plenty that we might help our brother.

We can imagine the priest, as he passed the wounded man, lying by the wayside, almost certainly—since he was a devout man—offering a prayer for him, asking God to help him. But his prayer availed not, for God had seen the man stricken down and had sent the priest that way, at that particular hour, for the very purpose of caring for him. Not prayer, then, but ministry, was the priest's duty just then, and no most earnest praying would be accepted in place of the human help the man was in need of and the priest could have rendered.

There is a great deal of such failure in duty, making prayer an easy substitute for service which would cost effort, or self-denial, or money, asking the Lord to do in some supernatural way, or through other helpers, the things which he has sent us expressly to do. Men beseech God to have pity upon certain people who are living in sin, to send them the gospel and to save them. God does not do what they ask, because it is not thus that the blessings sought can be given. Indeed, he has already long had pity upon these very people. His heart has gone

out to them in yearning love and compassion. More than that, the very persons who now pray so earnestly that he would show pity, God has sent to be his messengers of pity and mercy to these very lost ones, to tell them of Jesus Christ and to lead them to his cross. Instead, however, of fulfilling their commission, doing what they have been sent to do, they pause before their tasks and indolently ask God to do their work for them.

Good people come together in their church meetings and pray for the sick, the poor, the sorrowing, the fallen, the heathen, and then do nothing themselves to carry to a sad world the blessings which they so persistently implore God to send. No doubt the divine answer to many a pastor, as he leads his people in importunate prayer for help and blessing for the needy or troubled, for the extension of the kingdom of Christ, for the saving of souls, is, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the people that they go forward." God is ready to do all that is asked of him, but he can do it only through his people's faith, and their faith

can be shown only in going forth to try to do the things that need to be done. When we pray for the sick and the suffering we must go with our love and sympathy to do what we can for them. When we pray for the saving of the lost we must go straight to them to tell them of the love of Christ, or to find some way, at least, to get the message to them.

Much praying for the blessing of the Holy Spirit is made powerless and unavailing by the same lack of faith and obedience. God is ever ready to give his Spirit, but such prayer always implies action. We have something to do if the blessing is to come. It was "as they went" that the ten lepers were cleansed. If they had not set out at once, in obedience to the command of the Master, healing would not have come to them. It is thus, too, with the giving of all spiritual blessings — they come not through prayer alone, but through our rising up from our knees and going forward in the path of duty, in the way of obedience, in the effort to attain the thing longed for. When we have asked God to give us his Spirit, we are to

believe that we have the gift desired, and are to enter at once upon the life which the Spirit would have us live.

There is a duty of prayer, most sacred and holy, but prayer is by no means the only duty. The answer will never come while we stay on our knees, but only when we rise up and go forward. Dr. Babcock's little litany teaches us how to mingle prayer and doing:

O Lord, I pray
That for this day
I may not swerve
By foot or hand
From thy command,
Not to be served, but to serve.

This too, I pray:
That from this day
No love of ease
Nor pride prevent
My good intent,
Not to be pleased, but to please.

And if I may,
I'd have this day
Strength from above,
To set my heart
In heavenly art,
Not to be loved, but to love.

God's Slow Making of Us

One prayed in vain to paint the vision blest
Which shone upon his heart by night and day,
For homely duties in his dwelling pressed,
And hungry hearts which would not turn away,
And cares which still his eager hands bade stay.
The canvas never knew the pictured Face,
But year by year, while yet the vision shone,
An angel near him, wondering, bent to trace
On his own life the Master's image grown,
And unto men made known.

—Mabel Earle.

CHAPTER FOURTH

God's Slow Making of Us

GOD does not make us all at once. The process is a long one, running through all the years of our life, how many soever these years may be. God begins making us when we are born into the world, and his work on us and in us goes on continuously unto the end of our days. There is never an hour when some new touch is not given to our life, some new line marked in our character. A thousand agencies and influences minister in the making of us—the mother, the father, the home, the school, the playground, the church, books, companions, friends and friendships, joys and sorrows, successes, failures, health, sickness, roses and briars—all life's circumstances and events. These things all work upon us, yet not blindly, not without guidance. Always God is on the field, and he works in

and through all experiences, unless we drive him out of our life, so that really it is he who makes us. But there is no period in all the years when we can say that God has finished making us. We are always still in process of being made.

In one of George Macdonald's books occurs this fragment of conversation. "I wonder why God made me," said Mrs. Faber, bitterly. "I'm sure I don't know where was the use of making me."

"Perhaps not much yet," replied Dorothy; "but then he hasn't done with you yet. He is making you now, and you don't like it."

It would give us more patience with ourselves if we always remembered this. We would not get so discouraged with our infirmities, imperfections, and failures if we always kept in mind the fact that we are not yet made, that we are only in process of being made, that God is not yet through making us. It would often help us to understand better the reasons for the hard or painful experiences that come to us. God is at work on us, making us. If we yield

ourselves to his hand in quietness and confidence, letting him do what he will with us, all will be well.

At present we are not what we should be, neither are we what we shall be. The end is not yet manifest—"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It is a comfort to us, however, to know that God has a design in all his work upon us. There is nothing accidental in any of the providences that come into our life. There is a Hand that is guiding and controlling these providences, and there is a purpose running through all the events and circumstances. This purpose may not be evident to us, but there is an eye that always watches the pattern. God is always making us and fashioning us, and his thought for us is beautiful and good.

"'Tis the Master who holds the mallet,
And day by day
He is clipping whatever environs
The form away;
Which, under his skilful cutting,
He means shall be

Wrought silently out to beauty
Of such degree
Of faultless and full protection,
That angel eyes
Shall look on the finished labor
With new surprise,
That even his boundless patience
Could grave his own
Features upon such fractured
And stubborn stone.

"'Tis the Master who holds the chisel.
He knows just where
Its edge should be driven sharpest,
To fashion there
The semblance that he is carving;
Nor will he let
One delicate stroke too many,
Or few, be set
On forehead or cheek, where only
He sees how all
Is tending—and where the hardest
The blow should fall,
Which crumbles away whatever
Superfluous line
Would hinder his hand from making
The work divine."

If we were never to lose this consciousness out of our mind, it would help us to trust when

we cannot see. We do not need to know the reasons for the things in our life which seem strange. Faith is believing when we cannot see, trusting that God is good and acting toward us in love, even when all things seem to prove just the reverse. If we believe that God is gracious and loves us, and that he understands what he is doing, and has a wise design in it all, that should satisfy us as well as if we could find a thousand reasons of our own for what he is doing. Job puts his faith in confident words in one of his answers—

Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;
And backward, but I cannot perceive him:

On the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold him:
He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him:

But he knoweth the way that I take;
When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

The end cannot but be good—"I shall come forth as gold." Trial cannot harm any one whose life is hid with Christ in God. The great

problem of living is not to escape hard and painful experiences, but in such experiences to keep the heart gentle, loving, and sweet. We can do this only by resting confidently in God's love, without doubt or fear, however terrible the trial or suffering may be.

We should never pass judgment upon unfinished work of any kind. An unripe apple is not fit to eat, but we should not therefore condemn it. It is not yet ready for eating, because God is not yet done making it. Its unripeness is the precise condition which belongs to it at its present stage. It is a phase of its career and is fitting and good in its place. A child's piano playing may be execrable to the delicate ear of a trained musician, and yet there was a time in the history of his own musical development when he played no better, and when his friends and his teachers complimented him on his encouraging progress, seeing even in his faulty execution the evidences of genius and the marks of improvement. We have no right to judge the work of a beginner in any art or kind of work; we should wait until he has finished

what he is doing before we pass an opinion on it. No artist will submit his picture for inspection while in an incomplete state. Neither is it just or right for us to form opinions upon God's providences until they have been worked out to the end.

We should apply this rule to all that God is doing in us and with us. We should never mistake the processes nor the incomplete condition for the final result. God has not made us yet—he still has the work in hand, unfinished. Not much that is good, worthy, or beautiful may yet have come to perfection in us. We continue to make innumerable mistakes and to stumble and fall continually. Somehow we seem never to get our lessons learned. We think we know them, that we have fully mastered them, but when we try to put them into word or act we fail. We think we have learned patience at last, but we have scarcely got into the thick of life's events and experiences and begun to be tested when our patience is gone and we speak unadvisedly or act foolishly. We think we have faith now, and that we shall not again lose

confidence in any trial, but we have gone only a little way in the darkness of some new experience when our faith fails as before.

So it is with all our lessons,—we seem never able to get them wrought fully into life. But this should not discourage us. We are only learners, scholars at school, as yet. We are only children—not men. The fruit is not yet ripe. The picture is not yet painted. But if only we leave the fruit under the culture of the wise Husbandman it will some time grow to ripeness. The picture which seems only an outline sketch at present, dimly revealing the features of the Artist's thought, at length, when finished will win the praise of all who see it. We should be patient with our own slow progress in the Christian life, and with the growth in us of the things that belong to Christlikeness. If only we are sincere, faithful, and diligent we shall some day reach the mark. Others have gone on the same slow, painful way, and at length have realized all the beautiful visions of their hearts. So shall we, if we keep our faith and slack not our hand.

"One held unwritten in his heart through years
A song for which his earthly lips were mute,
Wherein were blended prayer, and peace, and tears,
Regret and hope which heaven shall bring to fruit;
A song unsung to mortal harp or lute.
Yet in his life the rhythmic fall of days
Love-tuned, the cadenced years of ministry,
Wrought out before the Lord a chant of praise,
Which now his choirs are singing by that sea
Where many mansions be."

For the same reason we should learn to wait for God until he makes known his purpose and will. Some of his ways seem strange to us. We cannot see love in their dark lines. Nor can we see how good can possibly come to us out of the painful experiences through which we are passing. Again we should remember that we may not judge of any work in its processes, but should wait until we see it finished. Take the story of Joseph, for illustration. If the narrative ended with the account of the boy carried off by the traders into Egypt, or with the account of the false accusation against him, under

which he was cast into a dungeon and loaded with chains, we should see nothing beautiful in it, and could find no justification of the goodness of God in permitting such terrible wrongs to befall one of his children. But when we read the story through to the end, and find Joseph at last next to the king in power, using his power for the good of his own people and for the good of the world, then we find abundant justification of God's righteousness.

Life is full of similar experiences. We must wait for the last chapter of the serial, to learn how the story ends, before we form a final opinion upon it. We must wait until the last chapter of a life is written before we say of the manner of its making that God is not good and kind. Knowing God as we do to be our Father we may trust his love and wisdom, though we can see nothing of love or goodness in the way he deals with us.

"*I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea*
Come drifting home, with broken masts and sails;
I will believe the Hand which never fails,

From seeming evil worketh good for me;
And though I weep because those sails are tattered,
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie shattered,
'I trust in thee.'"

It is a good thing to get into the heart such a strong faith in God that we shall never for a moment doubt the outcome of any experience or combination of experiences while we are doing his will and trusting him. This is not a world of chance—there is no chance anywhere. This is not the devil's world. Our Adversary does not have his own way, without restraint, without limit. "The Lord reigneth." "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The divine Hand is active in all the affairs of the earth. God knows what he is doing with us. In all that he sends to us—joy and sorrow, success and failure, hope and fear, pleasure and pain, loss and gain, he is making us. We have only to be loyal and faithful to him in every thought and feeling, and trustful in all experiences, and at length we shall find that in nothing has our divine Maker erred, but that he has done all things well.

Transfiguration

"We who are of the earth need not be earthy ;
God made our nature like his own—divine :
Nothing but selfishness can be unworthy
Of his pure image meant through us to shine.
The death of deaths it is ourselves to smother
In our own pleasures, his dishonored gift ;
And life—eternal life—to love each other ;
Our souls with Christ in sacrifice to lift."

CHAPTER FIFTH

Transfiguration

RANSFIGURATION . . . not Christ's, but ours. It does not seem strange to read that one wonderful night Jesus was transfigured. Deity dwelt in him. The wonder was that he was not always transfigured. But we are to have transfigurations too, we who belong to this earth. Saint Paul says to Christians, "Be ye transfigured." Our dull lives should shine.

This is not to be, either, after we get into heaven, but now, right here, in the present life. Nor is it to be in certain favored conditions, merely, in some holy service, but in the midst of the world's common experiences. Mr. Drummond said, "The three ingredients of a perfect life are: work, which gives opportunity; God, who gives happiness; love, that gives warmth." He reminds us also that the one per-

fectly transfigured life the world has known was spent, not with a book, but with a hammer and a saw. Thus the possibility of transfiguration is brought very near to us. Not in some rare ethereal circumstances only can the problem be worked out, but in the plainest, commonest lot.

Some people complain because they have so much to do, giving this as an excuse for not living beautifully. But there is no other way in which a life will become transfigured so quickly, so surely, as in the faithful, happy, cheerful doing of everyday tasks. Ordinary work is one of the best means of grace. Household life is not a sphere merely for good cooking, tidy sweeping and dusting, careful nursing, and the thousand things that it includes; it is a sphere, primarily, for transforming women's souls into radiant beauty. The shop, the mill, the store, the office, the farm, are not places merely for making machines, selling goods, weaving cloths, building engines, and growing crops; they are places, first of all, for making men, for building character, for growing souls. Right in the midst

of what some people call life's drudgery is the very best place in the world to get transfigured character.

We do not get the transfiguration out of the air. It is more than complexion—it runs deeper. It is not the result of the use of certain brands of cosmetics. The truth is, transfiguration is from within. It works from the heart out to the surface. It is something which the soul creates. It is the work of will and thought and feeling and being. One may have fine features, classically moulded, with a complexion pure, fresh, and beautiful as a child's, and yet not have a transfigured face. It is what shines out from within that transfigures. One taught a child to say,

Beautiful thoughts make a beautiful soul,
And a beautiful soul makes a beautiful face.

There is a whole philosophy in the couplet and the whole secret of growing beautiful. With the lesson written out so plainly, every young person should be able to get a transfigured face. Some one says that every face ought to be

beautiful at forty. That is, forty years ought to be time enough for the mystic chisels to carve loveliness in any face. It is more than the work of a day or a week. An artist may put a shining portrait on his canvas in a little while, but no one can put a transfiguration on human features in a day. It is the work of years. Slowly the beauty works up from the mind and spirit, through the nerves and muscles, into brow and cheeks and eyes.

"Beautiful thoughts"! So we see where we must begin—not with atmosphere and dainty cosmetics and lotions, but with thoughts. If we would have the heavenly shining on our face we must get heaven within our heart. One writes of another,

> *Her face was pinched and pale and thin,*
> *But splendor struck it from within.*

That is the only way to get the splendor on any face—from within. And it makes little difference whether the physical features are handsome or not, whether the cheeks are full and fair and blooming, or thin and pale and

pinched—if the glory breaks through from within there is a transfiguration. The problem then is to get the beautiful thoughts, to have the sweet, radiant inner life. If the angel is truly within, the enswathings of flesh will by and by become transparent, so that the loveliness shall shine through.

How to work out the problem is the question—how to get the splendor within, how to get in mind and heart the beauty that shall work out into the face. It is not easy to live a heavenly life in a world where the influences are antagonistic. It is much easier to conform to the maxims, habits, and dispositions of those about us than to maintain a life of prayer, of holiness, of love, in an atmosphere that is uncongenial. People sometimes grow weary in the struggle and say, "It is no use. I cannot stem the tide of worldly tendency. I cannot keep my heart gentle and sweet amid the selfishness, the meanness, the injustice, the dishonesty, about me." Yet this is just what we must do if we would be victorious in life.

The secret of transfiguration must always be

within. It begins in the new birth, being born again, born from above. A Christian, according to the New Testament, is one in whom Christ lives. Luther said that if anyone would knock at his heart's door and ask, "Who lives here?" he would answer, "Jesus lives here." One picture in The Revelation shows Christ outside a door, knocking, and we hear him saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This seems very wonderful, but it is no mere fancy. A German tale describes a fisherman's log hut that was changed into a temple of exquisitely wrought silver by a silver lamp, which was set within the hut. This illustrates what takes place in our lowly earthly lives when the glorious Christ is let into our hearts to dwell there.

Transfiguration is something very real. Sinful things are put out of the life, and the beauty of Christ takes their place. All holiness of character is summed up in love. If we truly love, our life is transfigured. Love is bright and

shining. Love makes all the world bright to our eyes. One writes: "A woman with a loving heart is sure to look upon the bright side of life, and by her example induces others to do so. She sees a good reason for all the unwelcome events which others call bad luck. She believes in silver linings and likes to point them out to others. A week of rain or fog, an avalanche of unexpected guests, a dishonest servant, an unbecoming bonnet, or any other of the minor afflictions of everyday life have nothing to disturb the deep calm of her soul. The love-light is always in her eyes, whether the day be dark or bright. It is she who conquers the grim old uncle and the dyspeptic aunt. The crossest baby reaches out its arms to her and is comforted. Old people and strangers always ask the way of her in the crowded streets. . . . Her gentle heart helps her to see the reason for every poor sinner's mistakes and condones every fault." That is transfiguration.

Saint Paul's list of the fruits of the Spirit all are shining qualities. Love is the first. Joy is

another. Joy is always bright. It is blue sky filled with stars. Peace is another. All in the wonderful list are transfigured graces—"long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." They all are features of the image of God, which though dimmed or marred by sin are restored by the Spirit in the new Christian life. This is the ideal for every Christian life—shining with the glory of God's grace.

In some heathen temple the priest puts a mark on the face of the worshippers who have made their offerings before the idol, and all day they bear this mark wherever they go. All who see them know where they have been in the morning, and what they have done. Nearly everyone we meet on the streets carries some mark which tells whence he has come, at what altar he has knelt. In some faces one sees the look which tells unmistakably of a life of animalism—appetite, lust, passion. It is easy to know at what shrines these bow. Some faces show hardness, coldness, bitterness, and one reads in them of the crushing out of the gentle-

ness of the heart in resentment or misanthropy. One's face is marked with the deep furrows of care, telling of anxiety and worry. Here is one that bears traces of sorrow. There are men, too, who worship at the altar of Mammon and women who bow before the goddess of Pleasure. Each face tells the story of the life's devotion.

There are those, too, whose faces carry in them the shining of peace which tells of the love of Christ in their heart. Wherever they go they shed a quiet, holy light, which witnesses to their faith and their devotion to the will of God. This is the one secret of transfiguration. It comes only in the life

"Where beauty
Walks hand in hand with duty."

Keeping One's Life in Tune

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our feverish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

Drop thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace.

—J. G. WHITTIER.

CHAPTER SIXTH

Keeping One's Life in Tune

PIANOS have to be kept in tune. Every now and then the tuner comes and goes over all the strings, keying them up, so that there will be no discords when the instrument is played. Our lives have a great many more strings than a piano, and much more easily get out of tune. Then they begin to make discords, and the music is spoiled. We need to watch them carefully, to keep their strings always up to concert pitch.

One way in which a piano is put out of tune is by use. The constant striking of the strings stretches them and they need to be keyed up from time to time. Life's common experiences have an exhausting effect. It is said of Jesus that "virtue went out of him" as he went about healing those who were sick. Virtue always goes out of us as we work, as we sympathize with

pain or sorrow, as we minister to others, as we strive and struggle. Duty drains our life fountains. We have our daily tasks, temptations, burdens, cares, trials, and at the close of the day we are tired, and the music our life makes is naturally not as sweet as it was in the morning. Night has a blessed ministry in renewing our physical vitality so that our bodies are ready with the new day for new service. And the songfulness of life is far more dependent upon the bodily condition than we dream of. It is much easier to be joyous and sweet when we are fresh and strong than when we are jaded and weary.

But the body is not all. We are made for communion with God. We need also to come into his presence at the end of the day to be spiritually renewed. The other day a young woman whose work is very hard, with long hours and incessant pressure, took a little time from her noon hour to call upon an older friend, saying, "I felt that if I could see you for five minutes, to get an encouraging word, I could get through the afternoon better." What is true of

a human friend, is true yet more of God. If we can get a little while with him when we are weary, when our strength is running low, our life will be put in tune so that the music will be sweet again. We cannot afford to live a day without communion with Christ, to get his strength, joy, and peace into our hearts.

One of the principal ways in which Sunday helps us is by lifting us up for a little while into accord with heavenly things. We withdraw from the toil, bustle, and noise of our weekday work into the quiet, where we can hear the songs of peace, catch sight of the face of God and commune with holy thoughts. The effect, if we avail ourselves of the possibilities of such a privilege, is to start us anew on a higher plane of living.

Henry Ward Beecher tells of visiting a painter. "I saw on his table some high-colored stones, and I asked him what they were for. He said that they were to keep his eye up to tone. When he was working in pigments, insensibly his sense of color was weakened, and by having a pure color near him he brought it up again,

just as the musician, by his test fork, brings himself up to the right pitch. Now every day men need to have a sense of the invisible God. No nature is of such magnitude that it does not need daily to be tuned, chorded, borne up to the idea of a pure and lofty life."

Another way in which a piano is put out of tune is by disuse. If it is kept closed its strings will lose their tone. The best way to take care of the instrument is to keep it in constant use. It is the same with our lives. They keep in tune best when they are fully occupied. It is a law of nature that a power not used wastes—at length shrivels and dies. This is true of all our faculties. Musicians can maintain their skill only by unceasing practice. A great pianist said that if he missed his hours at his instrument for three days, the public would know it; if for two days, his friends would be aware of it; and that if he failed in his practice even for one day, he himself would be conscious of it. Only daily practice would keep his fingers up to their standard of skill.

If we would keep our life in tune we must not

allow its powers to lie unused. We make the sweetest music when we are living at our best. An idle man never can be truly happy, nor can he be the best maker of happiness for others. We learn to love more by loving. We grow more joyous by rejoicing. If we cease to be kind even for a few days, it will show in the lowering of the tone of our life as others know us. If for only a day we fail in showing kindness, our hand will lose something of its skill and deftness in life's sweet ministries. Very beautiful is the prayer—

"*I ask, O Lord, that from my life may flow*
Such gladsome music, soothing, sweet, and clear
From a fine-strung harp, to reach the weary ear
Of struggling men,
To bid them pause awhile and listen; then
With spirit calmer, stronger than before,
Take up their work once more.
I only pray that, through the common days
Of this, my life, unceasingly may steal
Into some aching heart strains that shall help to heal
Its long-borne pain,
To lift the thoughts from self and worldly gain

And fill the life with harmonies divine ;
Oh, may such power be mine !
Thus would I live ; and when all working days
Are o'er for me,
May the rich music of my life ring on
Eternally !"

One who strives to make such a wish come true will always keep the harp of his life in tune. All the lessons set for us to learn may be gathered into one—the lesson of loving. Love is life's sweetest, best music.

A piano is put out of tune also by misuse. A skilful musician may spend hours in playing upon it without affecting the tone of any of the strings, but inexperienced and unskilful playing jangles the chords and makes the instrument incapable of producing sweet musical effects. Many people so misuse and abuse their lives that they destroy their power to give out sweetness. The consequence of sin is not merely the breaking of the divine law—every sin leaves marring and hurt in the life of him who commits it. Every time we violate our conscience or resist the divine will we lower the

moral tone of our being. In the familiar song, the bird with the broken wing never soared so high again. If we would keep our life in tune, so that it will make sweet music every day and wherever we go, we must avoid doing things that are wrong and do always the things that are right.

We cannot think too seriously of the hurt which sin inflicts upon our lives. We readily believe that the grosser sins do irremediable harm whenever they are indulged in. One who commits them is never the same again. Though forgiven and restored to divine favor, the effects of the sins remain. But in a measure the consequences of every form of evil are the same. A wicked thought leaves a stain. A moment of anger wounds and scars the soul. A grudge cherished hardens the heart. Bad temper works ruinously amid the affections. Envy is like a canker, eating out the life's finer texture. Jealousy sweeps amid all the gentle things of the heart like a fire, and nothing is ever so beautiful as before. Lost innocence comes not again. We do not know what harm we are letting into

our life when we open the door to an unkindly feeling, a prompting of pride, any emotion which is not in accordance with the will and love of God. They put the harp of a thousand strings out of tune.

Musicians have a standard pitch by which they tune all their instruments. The standard for our lives is the will of God. The word of God gives us the keynote. Our lives will make music only when they are in harmony with God. Jesus himself said, "I do always those things that please him." Then he said that, because of his unfailing obedience, the Father never left him alone. There was never any discordance or disharmony between his life and the Father's. Our lives are in tune just in so far as they are in harmony with God's will. Jesus said that if we keep his commandments we shall abide in his love, which means that there shall be nothing discordant between his life and ours. "Nearer, my God, to thee," is a prayer for the lifting of our spirits into such relations with God that the communion between him and us shall be perfect and unbroken.

"*Just to be tender; just to be true;*
Just to be glad the whole day through;
Just to be merciful; just to be mild;
Just to be trustful as a child;
Just to be gentle, and kind, and sweet;
Just to be helpful, with willing feet;
Just to be cheery when things go wrong;
Just to drive sadness away with a song;
Whether the hour is dark or bright,
Just to be loyal to God and right;
Just to believe that God knows best;
Just in his promise ever to rest;
Just to let love be our daily key—
This is God's will for you and for me."

The bringing of the powers of our own lives into tune is really the great problem of all spiritual culture. It takes all life here to work out the problem. All our mortal years we are in training. The object of all the discipline of experience is to bring our faculties and powers under the mastery of the divine Spirit, and to school our affections and feelings, our longings and desires, into the beauty of love.

While the audience is waiting for a concert to begin they hear a strange clangor back of the scenes. The instruments are being brought into

accord. At first they are far apart in their tones, but in a little time they all come into perfect harmony. Then the music begins. Each human life is a whole orchestra in itself. But it is not always in tune, and before it can begin to make sweet music its many chords must all be brought into accord. This is the work of spiritual culture. It is achieved only by the submission of the whole life to God. This is the work which divine grace sets itself to do in us. If we would have this result achieved we must sweetly and earnestly yield ourselves to God that he may bring us into tune with his own Spirit and teach us to make heavenly music in this world.

Putting Away Things Past

" The past is o'er—
Waste not thy days in vain regret,
Grieve thou no more.

" Look now before
And not behind thee ; do not fret—
The past is o'er.

" Close memory's door ;
That day is dead, that sun has set—
The past is o'er.

" There are in store
For thee still happy days. Forget !
Grieve thou no more."

CHAPTER SEVENTH

Putting Away Things Past

NE of the most serious problems of life is the laying down of things with which we have nothing more to do. It is hard for us to let go interests and affairs for which we have been responsible for a time, but the responsibility for which is now another's, not ours. We are apt to want to keep our hand upon the old tasks even when they are ours no longer. They seem to be part of our life which we cannot lay down. The old man, when his work and his cares have passed to his sons, or to others, finds it almost impossible not to continue his hold upon things. The mother in her advanced years, when her daughters are in their own homes and she is guest now, her old age gently sheltered by their love, unconsciously thinks of them as children still and expects not only the old honor which is rightly hers and

freely accorded, but ofttimes the old deference to authority, which is not her right.

In other ways, too, we find it almost impossible to break with our past. It is hard to give up a friend with whom one has been long associated, when by some providence the friend is taken away from one's companionship. Perhaps it is by death. The relation was one of sacred closeness. The friend was in all our life, one with us in all tender interests, the companion of our days and nights. We had learned to turn to him for counsel, to lean on him for support, to look to him for guidance and wisdom. We did nothing without him. He was eyes and hands and feet for us. He had long absorbed our early affection.

Then death takes him from us. It is easy to read over the comforts which the Scriptures have for us in our sorrow. We may also accept these comforts and let their quieting peace into our hearts. There may be no rebellion, no insubmission in our thought. We may look forward to the after-life with sure hope of reunion. Yet it seems impossible to leave our

friend out of our life, or to go on without him. Until yesterday he was in everything; how can we endure having him withdrawn from everything, every interest, every joy, every task, today? Yet that is the problem we must work out, for we cannot bring him back again. We must go on with our work and must do it well. We must learn, therefore, to do without the companionship, the cheer, the inspiration, of the friend who has gone from us.

There are two thoughts which will help to make this possible: first, a simple faith in Christ's teachings concerning the Christian's death and the other life; second, a vivid sense of present duty. If we clearly understand and fully believe that he who has gone from us is with Christ, living and continuing his life in a higher sphere, that he is happy and blessed, and actively engaged in his Redeemer's service, it will not be so hard to go on here without his bodily presence. Though we do not have him with us, cheering our earthly life as before, we have not really lost him. He is with us in all precious memories. The influence of his

life broods over us and has an abiding benediction for us. We are sure of his unchanged love for us, though out of our sight, and of his continued sympathy with us in all our work, struggle, and sorrow. With such faith as this, our life here will not be lonely. We have Christ and in Christ we have our friend, too, in a companionship that is full of precious joy and holy inspiration.

Then, further help in getting on without our friend who has been so much to us is found in earnest devotion to our own duty. Though his work on earth is finished, ours is not, and we may not slack our diligence until for us, too, the sun goes down. In a great battle, the commanding officer, leading his men in an assault, came upon the body of his own son, lying on the field. His impulse was to stop and give way to his grief, but he dared not do it. His duty was with his command. The issue of the battle depended upon him. So, falling upon the beloved form, he pressed a hot kiss on the dead lips, and then went on with his men, braver and stronger for his grief. We may

never let life's tasks drop out of our hands for sorrow, not even for an hour. Our work must be finished before the end of the day, and we have not a moment to lose. When we come to render our account, grief will not excuse us for failure in duty, for tasks omitted, for life's work unfinished.

Besides, in no other way can the divine comfort come to us with such fulness, such sweetness, such strengthening power, as when our hearts and hands are busy in duties and tasks for others. This is the only truly wholesome way to live at any time. The last thing for one in bereavement, seeking comfort, is to be idle. Then the grief feeds upon the life itself, and wastes and wears it out. But when in our sorrow we turn away from self to ministries of love for others, our hearts find comfort. Thus, and thus only, can we learn to live without one who has been everything to us in the past.

There is another way in which one may go out of our life and have to be given up irremediably. A letter received from a noble young woman tells of a friendship of years which has

now come to an end through the faithlessness of one who had long professed sincere friendship, but who at last has proved unworthy. There had been years of confidence, when no one doubted that he was a good man, and faithful and loyal in his friendship. At length, however, there came disclosures which made it necessary for the young woman to end at once relations which had meant everything to her, and to put out of her life altogether the friendship which, until that day, had seemed most worthy and satisfying.

Her friend had wrought himself into all her life. Their associations had been ideal. There had not been a shadow of fear in her love and trust. She had cherished many precious hopes for the future. For years she had had no thought of life apart from him. He was in all her pleasures, in all her plans, in all her dreams. Now the idol lies shattered at her feet, and there is no hope that it can ever be restored to its old place. It is certain that she must live henceforth without him.

But how can she do this? For one thing, she

may say that he has no longer any rightful place in her life. By his own acts he has separated himself from her irrevocably. She must now fill the empty place with other interests. It will be hard for her to put away all that has been so dear, so essential to her happiness, but there is nothing else to be done.

Sometimes in such cases the grief over the disappointment is allowed to darken the wronged life, mar its beauty and hinder its usefulness. But it is not thus that the Master would have one of his friends meet such a trial. He wants us in all experiences to be victorious. When we must endure wrong he would have us endure it sweetly and songfully. He knows how hard such an experience is, for he suffered the worst phases of false friendship in his own life. He understands, therefore, and sympathizes, and will help. This is a harder experience than where a faithful friend has died, for then all the memories are sacred and the tie is still unbroken, for

"Death doth hide,
But not divide."

In this case, however, even the memory has been stained by the falseness at the last, and the separation is real and final. Yet there still is comfort in devotion to Christ and to the service of love in his name. Always it is true that the lonely life may find solace and satisfaction in ministering to others. In no other way does comfort come so surely and with such consoling power to the empty heart. In feeding others we feed ourselves.

These are illustrations of a duty which ofttimes is very important—to cut ourselves altogether off from a past with which we now have nothing whatever to do. We are to forget the things which are behind and press toward the things which are before. We make a mistake when we allow the memories of the past or its influences so to absorb our mind and heart as to unfit us for doing well the duties of the present.

Emerson teaches the lesson well in a terse paragraph: "Finish every day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. To-morrow is a new

day; begin it well and serenely; and with too high a spirit to be cumbered with your old nonsense. This day is all that is good and fair. It is too dear, with its hopes and invitations, to waste a moment on the yesterdays."

The Ripening of Character

It matters little the pace we take,
If we journey sturdily on
With the burden bearer's steady gait,
Till the day's last hour is gone ;
Or if, with the dancing feet of the child,
Or the halting step of age,
We keep the goal in the eye of the soul,
Through the years of our pilgrimage.

—MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

The Ripening of Character

CHARACTER is a growth. It is like fruit—it requires time to ripen. Different kinds of fruits come to ripeness at different seasons; some in the early summer, some later, and some only in the autumn. It is so with Christian lives—they ripen at different seasons. There are those who seem to grow into sweetness in early years, then those who reach their best in the mid years, and many who only in the autumn of old age come into mellow ripeness.

All life is a season of character-growing. We are left in this world, not so much for what we may do here, for the things we may make, as that we ourselves may grow into the beauty of God's thought for us. In the midst of all our occupations and struggles, all our doing of tasks, all our longings and desires, all our ex-

periences of every kind, there is a work going on in us which is quite as important as anything we are doing with our mind or with our hands.

In the school the boy has his tasks and lessons. According to his diligence or indolence is his progress in his studies. In ten years, if he is faithful, he masters many things and stands high in his class. Or, if he is indifferent and careless, he gets only a smattering of knowledge, with so many links missing that his education is of little practical use to him. But meanwhile there has been going on in him another education, a growth of development of character. The mind grows by exercise, just as the body does. Each lesson learned adds its new fact to the measure of knowledge, but there is, besides, an effect produced upon the mind itself by the effort to learn. It grows by exercise.

Then there is also a subjective moral impression produced by the way the task is performed. If one is faithful and conscientious, truly doing his best, the endeavor leaves a

mark of beauty in the life. But if one is unfaithful, indolent, false to one's self, there is left a wound, a trace of marring and blemish, a weakening of the life.

The same is as true of all life's callings as of schoolwork. The farmer is cultivating his soil, tilling his fields, looking after the manifold duties of his occupation ; but this is not all that he is doing. At the same time he is making character of some kind, building up the fabric of his own manhood. The carpenter is working in wood, but he is also working on life—his own life. The mason is hewing stones and setting them in the wall, but he is also quarrying out blocks for the temple of character which he himself is building in himself. Men in all callings and employments are continually producing a double set of results, in that on which they work, and in their own lives. We are in this world to grow, to make character in ourselves, and every hour we leave some mark, some impression on the life within us, an impression which shall endure when all the work of our hands has perished.

But there is also a growth of character which goes on continually under the influence of life's circumstances and experiences. Fruits are developed and are brought on toward ripeness by the influence of the weather and the climate. It takes all the different seasons, with their variety of climatic conditions, to produce a delicious apple, a mellow pear, or a cluster of luscious grapes. Winter does its part as well as spring, summer, and autumn. Night and day, cloud and sunshine, cold and heat, wind and calm, all work together to bring the fruit to ripeness.

In like manner all life's varied experiences have their place in the making and the culture of our character. All sunshine would not make good fruit, nor would all gladness and joy produce the richest character. We need the dark as well as the light; cold, rough winter as well as warm, gentle summer. We should not, therefore, be afraid of life, whatever experiences it may bring to us. But we should always remember that nothing in life's experiences ought to be allowed to hurt our spirits. Temp-

tations may make their fierce assaults, may cause us sore struggles, but we need not be harmed by them, need not carry away from them any stain. Earthly want may leave its marks of emaciation on our body, but the inner life need not bear any trace of enfeebling. We ought to be growing continually in beauty and strength of character, however painful our lot in life. Sickness may waste physical strength and blight the beauty of the face, but it need not leave any hurtful trace on the life itself. Indeed, in the midst of the most exhausting and disfiguring illness, the inner life may continue to grow in strength and beauty. St. Paul gives us this assurance, "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." That is, if we are living as we may live in relation to Christ, our real life will only become more radiant and beautiful as the external life grows more infirm and feeble.

"*And what of the hours when, hand and foot,*
We are bound and laid aside,
With the fevered vein and the throbbing pain,
And the world at its low ebb-tide?

And what of our day of the broken heart,
When all that our eyes can see
Is the vacant space where the vanished face
Of our darling used to be?

"*Then, waiting and watching and almost spent,*
Comes peace from the Lord's own hand,
In his blessed will, if we rest content,
Though we cannot understand;
And we gather anew our courage and hope
For the road so rough to climb,
With trial and peril we well may cope
One single step at a time."

Yet too often this possibility is not realized. Not all Christian people bear loss, sorrow, and sickness in this victorious way. Too often do we see men yielding to trouble, not growing more beautiful in soul, but losing their spiritual beauty in life's trials. This is not the way it should be, however. Our character should ripen in life's weather, whatever the weather may be. "Tribulation worketh patience." The object of life is to learn to live. We are at school here, and shall always be at school until we are dismissed from earth's classes to be promoted into heaven. It is a pity if we do not learn our

lessons. It is a pity if we grow no gentler, no kindlier, no more thoughtful, no more unselfish, no sweeter in spirit, no less worldly, if the peace of our heart is not deepened, as the years pass over us.

There are some fruits which remain acrid and bitter until the frosts come. There are lives which never become mellow in love's tenderness until sorrow's frosts have touched them. There are those who come out of every new experience of suffering or pain with a new blessing in their lives, cleansed of some earthliness, and made a little more like God. It is God's design for us that this should always be the outcome of affliction, that the fruits of the Spirit in us should be a little riper and mellower after every experience of trouble; and we fail and disappoint God when it is not so.

Old age should be the true harvest time of the years. Life should grow more and more beautiful unto the end. It should increase in knowledge, in wisdom, in all the graces of the Spirit, in all the sweetness of love, in all that is Christlike. Christian old people should be like

trees in the autumn, their branches full of ripe fruit to feed the hunger of those who live about them. They should be

"Rich in experience that angels might covet;
Rich in a faith that has grown with the years."

We have much to do with this ripening of our own character. God gives us his grace, but it is ours to receive it, and we may reject it. It is only when we abide in Christ that our lives grow in Christlikeness. The same sun brings out the beauty in the living branch, and withers the branch that is torn from the tree. Sorrow and pain blight the life that is not hid with Christ in God, and make more beautiful and more fruitful the life that is truly in Christ. If we live thus continually under the influence of the divine grace, our character shall grow with the years into mellow ripeness. Even the rough weather, the storm and the rain, the chill of cold nights and the snows of winter, will only bleach out the stains and cleanse our life into whiteness.

The smallest things have their influence upon

character and upon the beauty and the helpfulness of a life. It was related recently of an English oculist, that he had given up cricket purely in the interest of his profession. He was very fond of the game, but he found that playing affected the delicacy of his touch and made him less ready for the work he was required to do every day upon the eyes of his patients. A pianist said the other day that he had given up riding his bicycle, because grasping the bars stiffened the muscles of his fingers and affected his playing.

There are occupations which in like manner affect the life and character injuriously, hinder the growth of spirituality or make one less effective in work upon the life and character of others. We need to deal with ourselves firmly and very heroically. Anything that unfits us for doing our work in the best way possible we should strictly and conscientiously avoid. If a minister cannot preach well after eating a hearty breakfast, he should eat sparingly. If a certain form of amusement dissipates spirituality, we would better not indulge in it. We

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must seek always to be at our best, ready for whatever duty or service may be required of us. We should see to it that our life always yields fruits that are luscious and sweet, and whatever unfavorably affects the quality of our spirit, our disposition, or our service, should be avoided.

We live but one life, we pass but once through this world. We should live so that every step shall be a step onward and upward. We should strive to be victorious over every evil influence. We should seek to gather good and enrichment of character from every experience, making our progress ever from more to more. Wherever we go we should try to leave a blessing, something which will sweeten another life or start a new song or an impulse of cheer or helpfulness in another heart. Then our very memory when we are gone will be an abiding blessing in the world.

"So, when I fall like some old tree,
And subtle change makes mould of me,
There let the earth show a fertile line
Where perfect wild-flowers leap and shine."

Steps on the Stair

" *Speak a shade more kindly than the year before ;*
Pray a little oftener ; love a little more ;
Cling a little closer to the Father s love ;
Thus life below shall liker grow to life above."

CHAPTER NINTH

Steps on the Stair

THE years ought to be ascending steps in the ladder of life. We should always be going upward. Heaven is high—a place of perfect beauty and holiness. When we begin to live truly we begin to climb toward heaven. It looks far away, so far that it seems to us we never can reach it. But we are sure that we can. We are not left to struggle up unhelped. There always are angels on the ladder, going up and coming down—going up on our behalf, to tell of our faith and our struggles, and then coming down to bring us help out of heaven. We need not doubt, therefore, that heaven is really within our reach and that through the help of God we shall some day enter its doors if only we continue faithful. But the way is not easy. It is a mountain climb. It is never easy to go up a steep moun-

tain. This mountain is very high. No matter how long we have been on the way, nor how far we have gone, heaven still keeps far above us. The saintliest people we know tell us that they have not yet attained, but are still pressing on toward the goal. A ladder does not suggest rapid going up, but it does suggest patient, continuous ascending. True living is always progressive. The experiences are variable, but persistent faith and courage ever conquer circumstances, and make the hardest conditions yield contentment and hope, so that the feet are ever climbing higher.

The years set their mileposts on the way, and it would be a pity if any one of these should fail to mark some gain, some advance. It is not enough to have the figures grow which register the years. Getting older is not necessarily getting better. Moving onward is not always moving upward. Nor is the doing of a great deal of work in a year a proof that we are making the truest use of our time—there are those who are always busy and yet never accomplish anything that lasts. Nor is the piling up of posses-

sions a sure indication that one is really growing. Men too often have buried their manhood away in their accumulations of wealth.

The true upward climbing which the years should mark must be in the life itself, not in its condition and circumstances, nor in any of its accessories. What a man is is the test of his living, not what he does nor what he has. There must be a growth in mental qualities and resources. Not to have learned anything new in a year, not to be any wiser, not to be able to think more clearly, does not show a worthy use of time and opportunities. There must be a growth also in heart qualities. Time and its experiences should make us gentler, kindlier, less selfish, more thoughtful, more considerate of others, with truer sympathy, and larger ability for helpfulness. In the full life there must also be a spiritual growth. The peace of God must rule in it more and more deeply. Self must have less and less place and power in the directing of the life, and Christ must hold increasing sway. Love's lessons must be better and better learned.

Many lives are hurt by the experiences through which they pass. They have losses, disappointments, sorrows, and, perhaps, are called to endure wrongs, and instead of coming through all victoriously, they yield and become discouraged and embittered. One who lives truly, however, is unhurt by even the most disheartening circumstances. He meets them with cheerfulness and confidence. Robert Louis Stevenson is a recent example of such victoriousness. It has been said of him: "Rarely has been witnessed a manlier struggle than that made by this exquisite writer and lovable man, who fought life-long disease and weakness for the sake of others, and who remained sunny and cheerful to the end. Into his writings crept no note of discouragement, no embittered tone, though often the words were penned upon a sick bed. He believed in happiness, not so much for personal pleasure, as to create a circle of kindly influence round about him." In the following lines Stevenson clearly indicates the task he had set for himself in this direction:

If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain,
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain—
Lord, thy most pointed pleasure take,
And stab my spirit broad awake.

We date our letters, "In the year of our Lord." There is something very inspiring in this designation. The years are Christ's, not ours. He gives them to us that on each of their pages we may write something worth while, a word or two which shall make the world richer and better, something of which we shall not be ashamed when the books are opened at the end of time. It is not enough that we do not blot the pages with records of gross sins; we should fill them also with the story of noble and beautiful things. Every day should be rich in ministries of good.

"*Count that day poorly spent wherein*
You were not all you might have been."

Birthdays are good times for new beginnings. Birthdays are not different from other days in their external aspect. The sun rises no earlier, lingers no later, and shines no more brightly. The sky is no bluer, and the air is no purer. The birds sing no more sweetly, and the flowers are no lovelier. Tasks are no easier, burdens are no lighter, and paths are no smoother. Yet there is a sense in which a birthday is different from all other days. It is a milestone recording another station of progress in the life, and no thoughtful person can pass it without pausing a moment for a look backward and then forward. The event is brightened also by the tokens of love and friendship which it brings, for there are few in these good days whose hearts are not warmed by reminders of interest and affection from their friends on their birthdays. Thus the days are made to stand out among the days of the year with a brightness all their own.

It is not enough, however, to have a birthday made happy by the congratulations of friends, by tokens of affection, by letters filled with

good wishes. It should be marked also among the days by some uplift, some new beginning, some victory over temptation or fault, some fresh gift from heaven. No to-morrow should be just like to-day, no better, no more beautiful, no fuller of helpfulness. But every birthday should mark a special advance. We should never be content to live any year just as we lived the one that is gone. Contentment is a Christian grace, but contentment does not mean satisfaction. We are never to be restless —restlessness is a mark of weakness—but we can have perfect poise and the blessing of Christ's peace, and yet be eagerly pressing on all the while to new attainments and new achievements.

We should mark our birthdays by a clearing away of whatever is out of date and no longer of use in our life, and especially of whatever cumbers or hinders us, whatever impedes our progress. As we grow older there are many things which we should leave behind. When we become men we should put away childish things, but some men never do. They always

remain childish. Childlikeness is very beautiful —it is commended by the Master as the very ideal of Christian life and character; but childishness is unbeautiful and unlovely, and should be left behind as we pass on. Then, we are continually coming to the end of things which may have been important in their time, but we have outlived their necessity. A birthday is a good time to get clear of all these worn-out, superseded things. We should move out of the old house, leaving in the garrets and lumber-rooms the things we need no more, and making a new home for our souls with only fit and beautiful things in it.

A birthday should be a time also for taking fresh hold of life. The tendency is to live in routine, and routine is likely to be fatal to zest and enthusiasm. We easily lose sight of our ideals and drift imperceptibly into commonplace living. We need to be waked up now and then to a fresh consciousness of the meaning of life. One of the perils of comfortable living is the falling into easy ways. We forget that the easy path does not slope upward, that worthy

things can be reached only by climbing, and that the true way is not only steep but oft-times craggy. The really noble and worthy things in life can be attained only at the cost of toil and struggle. Not heaven alone, but whatever belongs to the kingdom of heaven, must be won on the battlefields of life.

Yet the revealing of this fact that the prizes of life cannot be got easily should never daunt any one. Indeed, a large part of the value and blessing in any achievement or attainment lies in what it costs. We grow most under burdens. We get strength in struggle. We learn our best lessons in suffering. The little money we are paid for our toil is not the best part of the reward—the best is what the toil does in us in new experience, in wisdom, in patience, in self-conquest.

But, whatever the cost of life's gains, we should be ready to pay it in full. We need not trouble ourselves greatly either about earthly position or about our largeness in men's eyes; it is infinitely more important that we make sure of growing in the things that belong to true man-

hood. A distinguished man said, "If I had a son, I should tell him many times a day to make himself as big a man on the inside as possible." That should ever be our aim, and on each new birthday this vision of worthy life should be set freshly before us.

This ideal concerns two things—our own growth in whatsoever things are lovely and true, and our work on the lives of others. One writes, "To be at once strong and gentle, true and kind, to be braver to-day than yesterday, swifter to respond to earth's music, slower to notice its discords, to have eye and hand growing ever quicker to note and more ready to aid the need around us, to have the voice take a cheerier tone day by day, and the eyes a quicker light, because in our souls we believe that

'God's in his heaven:
All's right with the world'—

this is to be growing in grace. What higher ideal of life can we have than that of making a little brighter, sweeter, stronger, a little better or happier in some way, every life that touches

our own? Whether we do it by sermon or song, by merry laugh or sympathetic tear, by substantial aid, or 'trifles light as air,' matters not at all so long as it is done for Christ's dear sake and the bringing nearer of his kingdom."

Getting Help from People

Such a heart I'd bear in my bosom
That, threading the crowded street,
My face should shed joy unlooked for
On every poor soul I meet;
And such wisdom should crown my forehead
That, coming where councils stand,
I should carry the thoughts of justice
And stablish the weal of the land.

—Julia Ward Howe.

CHAPTER TENTH

Getting Help from People

E receive help in our Christian lives through many channels. But more, perhaps, than we are aware of, does God use other human hearts and lives as his agents in blessing and helping us. Every true Christian is sent among men to be an interpreter of Christ. No one can see Christ in his invisible glory, and therefore we who know him and love him, and in whom he dwells, are to be his interpreters. Every faithful follower of the Master is the bearer of blessings from the great fountain of infinite life and love. In every pure, true, worthy friend whom God gives to us, he sends to us a little measure of his own love and grace. One writes, in recognition of a new blessing God has sent,—

God never loved me in so sweet a way before;
'Tis he alone who can such blessings send;

And when his love would new expression find,
He brought thee to me, and said, "Behold a friend!"

It would add much to the sacredness of our friendships if we thought of them in this way—that in them God is mercifully sending us new gifts of his grace. If we always had this lofty conception of the ministry of friendship, it would make us ever reverent and thoughtful as we touch the lives of others, ever careful to be God's messenger indeed to every one, and to wait at his feet for the gift which he would send by us to our friend.

The Christian thought of life in all its relations is that of service and helpfulness. We should always be a means of grace to others. No one should ever receive from us any influence that would cause hurt or marring, or that would make it harder to live right or easier to do wrong. On the other hand, every one who touches us should get from us some good, some encouragement, some cheer, some incitement to righteousness, some fresh inspiration toward nobleness, some strengthening of the purpose

to live nobly, some quickening of life. Very fitting for daily use is the prayer,

May every soul that touches mine—
Be it the slightest contact — get therefrom some good,
Some little grace, one kindly thought,
One inspiration yet unfelt, one bit of courage
For the darkening sky, one gleam of faith
To brave the thickening ills of life,
One glimpse of brighter skies beyond the gathering mist,
To make this life more worth while,
And heaven a surer heritage.

Wherever love is, love that is kindled at the heart of God, there is always the desire to serve. This may not be the ordinary conception. When we wish for friends, it is possible that we have in mind those who shall be friends to us, bringing into our lives profit, help, happiness, enjoyment, comfort. But Christian love is not an earthborn passion,—it has its source in Jesus Christ; it is the love of God shed abroad in human hearts, and this love "seeketh not its own." The Christian conception is

not that of having a friend but of being a friend; not of being ministered unto, but of ministering.

If this divine affection be in us we shall desire to be a blessing to every one we meet, to impart to him some good. If this meaning of Christian love be realized, even imperfectly, it will make the followers of Christ mutually and reciprocally helpful to each other. There are many ways in which Christians should minister to each other's happiness and good.

There is help in fellowship. When two walk together one strengthens the other. One log will not burn alone, but when two or more are laid together one kindles the other and the flame grows hot. Christian life cannot reach its best in solitude. Jesus had a reason for sending out his disciples two and two. One helped the other in many ways. If one was discouraged the other would hearten him. If one was growing indifferent the other would quicken his love. Then the value of their work was more than doubled, for the strength and skill of one would supplement the weakness and inadequacy

of the other. In prayer two are better than one, for faith inspires faith and fervency kindles fervency.

Example also has its value. We see one person living sweetly, beautifully, victoriously, and there arises in us a desire to live as he does. There is an influence of life upon life which is pervasive and resistless.

> "*Unshapen, hardened, thrown away,*
> *A worthless piece of potter's clay.*
> *Beside it grew a rose; it died,*
> *Yet not in vain, for ere the end*
> *Its fragrance with the clay did blend.*
> *Thus into darkened lives we may*
> *Plant love, and hope's effulgent ray.*"

There is an education of great value which results from the contact of life with life. Students often get more from each other and from their personal relations with their teachers than they get from books. It is so in all association.

"*Iron sharpeneth iron;*
So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

Thus people are means of grace to us. It used to be thought that in order to be holy one must flee away from the world, even from friends, and live alone. But this was a mistaken thought of life. We grow best among people. Even the keen, sharp contacts which bruise and hurt have their part in making men of us. There are lessons we never could learn save in the midst of people, tied up in human fellowships. We could not learn patience if we had not calls for exercising patience in our daily associations. We should never grow to be thoughtful, if the duty were not set for us, with abundant opportunity for practice, in our home, in our friendships, in our comradeship with others. Some of us could never have been cured of our insane self-conceit if we had not been hurled into the dust and trampled upon. We should never become sympathetic, kindly, gentle, if there were nothing in our associations to call out and exercise these qualities in us. Sometimes we pity certain persons, because in their natural human relationships they are required to practice self-denial, to carry heavy burdens, to

make great sacrifices, to endure much suffering. But it is in just such experiences that they grow. The exacting requirements of their life are means of grace, and in meeting them they become more and more like Christ.

There are some whose lives are so set apart for ministry to others and so filled with calls for service that they seem to have no opportunity to be ministered to by others. They are always giving and never receiving. They spend their days in helping others, but no one helps them. They carry the burdens of many, but no one comes to carry their burden. They are comforters of the sorrow of all their friends, but in their own grief no one ministers consolation to them. They share their bread with the hungry, but when they are hungry no man gives unto them. Yet these find their help in the very serving to which they devote their lives. In feeding others, they are fed. In comforting others, they are comforted. In blessing others they are blessed. It matters not that no others come to serve them—they are served in their service.

"A poor man saved by thee shall make thee rich,
A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong.
Thou shalt thyself be served by every lease
Of service thou hast rendered."

Association with other Christians has its immeasurable help in time of need. This is one of the benefits of ideal church membership. The strong help the weak. Much has been said of the way the poor help each other. The experienced hold the lamp for the feet that are new on tangled paths. But even help in trouble is not the best that love has to give. Better far is the help which it may give continually in the way of inspiration and in asking for the best that is in us. The church does the most for its young people when it holds up a lofty standard of excellence in character and urges them to attain it; when it sets large tasks for them and expects these tasks to be achieved. We should welcome all such demands upon us, for they are divine calls, bidding us to be worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Here is a prayer which every young person may fitly make his own:—

"Send some one, Lord, to love the best that is in me, and to accept nothing less from me; to touch me with the searching tenderness of the passion for the ideal; to demand everything from me for my own sake; to give me so much that I cannot think of myself, and to ask so much that I can keep nothing back; to console me by making me strong before sorrow comes; to help me so to live that, while I part with many things by the way, I lose nothing of the gift of life."

"This, too, Shall Pass Away"

Art thou in misery, brother? This I say,
Be comforted. Thy grief shall pass away.
Art thou elated? Ah! Be not too gay:
Temper thy joy. This, too, shall pass away.
Art thou in danger? Still let reason sway,
And cling to hope. This, too, shall pass away.

—Paul Hamilton Hayne.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

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E meet life's experiences wisely only when we keep in mind their transientness Whatever they may be, painful or pleasant, they will soon pass away. We need not be too greatly troubled by that which is hard, for relief will soon come. We should not be too much elated by prosperity, for it will not last always.

A Christian woman who is constantly engaged in some form of activity was telling of the way she learned a valuable lesson. She was to meet a friend at a railway station, and the two were to go together to an important meeting. They were a few seconds late—they saw the train on which they intended to go to their engagement moving away. The first woman was greatly annoyed and spoke to the other of her deep regret that they had missed the train. The

other was quiet and undisturbed, and answered, "Oh, this will soon pass away." The good woman tried to show her friend how very unfortunate it was that they were late, but to all the reasons given why they should be vexed and worried her only answer was, "This, too, will pass away." She persisted in refusing to be disturbed, finding her refuge always in the thought that whatever was vexing or annoying would soon be gone.

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Long live his proverb! While the world shall roll
To-morrow's fresh shall rise from out the night,
And new-baptize the indomitable soul
With courage for its never-ending fight.

No one, I say, is conquered till he yields;
And yield he need not while, like mist from glass,
God wipes the stain of life's old battlefields
From every morning that he brings to pass.

New day, new hope, new courage! Let this be,
O soul, thy cheerful creed. What's yesterday,
With all its shards and wrack and grief, to thee?
Forget it, then—here lies the victor's way!

Much of the discomfort of our lives is caused by people. Ofttimes they are annoying. They are not thoughtful or considerate. They do not regard our wishes. They have no patience with our idiosyncrasies. They do not show us proper respect. They are not always gentle with us. They irritate us by ways that are distasteful to us. Some of us find it a most serious matter to get along with people. It would help us, however, in our task of keeping sweet and loving, if we would always recall the fact, in

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The truth of the transientness of all earthly things should also temper our human joys and save us from being too deeply absorbed in them. This is true of pure human affections.

God wants us to cherish them. But we are never to forget that there is a sense in which these, too, shall pass away. We cannot keep our loved ones ever by our side. There is a way, however, in which we may lift these human relations out of the transient, the evanescent, so that they shall be resumed in that world where there is no change, where no flowers fade, where nothing beautiful and good ever shall pass away. But in a human and earthly sense we should remember, even of the tenderest affection and the sweetest joy, "This, too, shall pass away."

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Choosing to do Hard Things

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The roaring tide of life, than lie
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In all departments of life this indolent, easy-going way of getting on is working its mischief. There is much of it in school or college. Then it abounds in the trades and professions. A successful business man says that the chief reason why so many young men never get advancement nor make anything worth while of their lives is the want of thoroughness. They do only what is easy, and never grapple with anything that is hard. Consequently, they do not fit themselves for any but the easiest places, and no position of importance ever can be easily filled. Indolence is the bane of countless lives. The capacities in them are never developed for want of energy. They do not rise because they have not the courage and persistence to climb.

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things did not go to please her. It is not so easy, but it is better, if young people have disappointments, burdens, and responsibilities and do not always have their own way. Thus they will be trained to self-restraint, and taught to submit their wills to God's.

Of course, not always do persons get the lessons and the character they should get out of the hard things of earlier years. Some are not good learners in life's school. Some grow bitter in disappointment and lose the sweetness out of their lives when they have to endure trial. But in all that is hard there is the possibility of blessing, and the problem of living is to find it—in all struggle, care, and endurance to gather new nobleness and grace.

"*Out of all stress and strife,*
Out of all disappointments, pain,
What deathless profit shall I gain?
If sorrow cometh, shall it slay?
Or shall I bear a song away?
When wave and tide against me lift,
Shall I still cleave my course, or drift?
Soul! nerve thyself to such as these
Deep problems, sacred destinies!

It matters not what fate may give;
The best is thine—to nobly live."

It is perilous presumption to rush into the battle when we have no business in it, when it is not our battle. Yet, on the other hand, we are not to be afraid of any struggle or temptation when it lies in the way of our duty. It is cowardly to shrink from the battle when we are called into it. When God leads us he means to help us. No task which he assigns will ever prove too hard for us if we do our best in Christ's name. When we face a new condition for which it seems to us we have neither strength nor skill, the only question is, "Is it our duty?" If so, there is no doubt as to what we should do, nor need we have any fear of failure. Hard things become easy when we meet them with faith and courage.

Some people have a habit of skipping the hard things. It begins in childhood in school. The easy lessons are learned because they require no great effort, but when a hard one comes in the course, it is given up after a half-hearted trial. The habit thus allowed to begin in school

work easily finds its way into all the life. The boy does the same thing on the playground. When the game requires no special exertion, he goes through it in a creditable enough way. But when it is hotly contested, and when only by intense struggle can the victory be won, he drops out. He does not have the courage or the persistence to make an intense effort. The girl who lets her school lessons master her, who leaves the hard problems unsolved and goes on, soon begins to allow other hard things to master her. The home tasks that are disagreeable or that would require unusual effort she leaves unattempted. It is not long until the habit of doing only the easy things and skipping whatever is hard pervades all the life. The result is that nothing brave or noble is ever accomplished, that the person never rises to anything above the commonplace.

In many ways does this habit of failing at hard things hurt the life. These difficult things are put in our way, not to stop us in our course, but to call out our strength and develop our energy. If we never had any but easy things to

do, things requiring no effort, we should never get strong. If we timidly give up whenever we come to something that is hard, we shall never get beyond the attainments of childhood. If we decline the effort, and weakly say we are not able to make it, we have lost our chance of acquiring a new measure of power.

We should not forget that no one ever did anything of great value to others without cost. A quaint old proverb says, "One cannot have omelet without breaking eggs." If we would do anything really worth while that will be a blessing in the world, we must put into it not merely easy efforts, languid sympathies, conventional good wishes, and courtesies that cost nothing,—we must put into it thought, time, patience, self-denial, sleepless nights, exhausting toil. There is a legend of an artist who had found the secret of a wonderful red which no other artist could imitate. The secret of his color died with him. But after his death an old wound was discovered over his heart. This revealed the source of the matchless hue in his

pictures. The legend teaches that no great achievement can be made, no lofty attainment reached, nothing of much value to the world done, save at the cost of heart's blood.

Giving What We Have

"*As the mite the widow offered*
Brought a blessing sweet and rare
And the riches of the miser
Were not worth a pauper's prayer—
So I smile when men mark failure
O'er the life of any man;
For the acme of all greatness
Is to do the best we can."

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

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THERE always are those who wrap their talent for service in the napkin of not-worth-while. They feel that they could not do much because their ability is so small, and therefore they do not try to do anything. They suppose that they are practising the much-praised virtue of humility, while really they are evading duty and responsibility, and thus incurring blame and guilt.

The truth is, no one, however small his abilities, need live uselessly. God bestows no talents which he means to be wrapped up in napkins of any kind. Of course we cannot give what we have not. One who has no money cannot give money aid to others who need. One who lacks strength cannot help those who are weak. One who does not know the way cannot be guide to others in difficult or intricate paths. We must

learn before we can teach. We must understand the way of salvation before we can make the way plain for our friends. If we have not learned to sympathize, we cannot give sympathy to those who are in trouble. If we have had no experience of sorrow and of divine comfort, we cannot give comfort to those who are in sorrow. We cannot show others the love of God if we have not received that love into our own hearts. The teacher cannot tell his scholars more about the Christian life than he knows himself. The preacher cannot lead his people farther in the ways of Christ than his own feet have gone.

But we should give always what we have. We are never to say, "There is no use in my giving, for I have so little. It can do no one any good." We have nothing to do with the matter of larger or smaller. We are responsible only for what we have. If it is but one little talent, one little talent is all we shall have to answer for. But we must answer for that, and if we fail to use it, we shall not only lose it in the end, but also shall incur the penalty of uselessness.

Nor do we know what is really small in its capacity for usefulness or its possibilities of growth. Talents that are used are multiplied by the using. By giving what we have to-day we shall have more to give to-morrow. Many of those who have blessed the world most richly had but little at first. They did what they could, however, and as they lived and served, their capacity for living and serving increased, until at length they reached countless thousands with the benediction of their influence.

What we have we should give, we are bound to give. We should never withhold it. It is not ours to keep only for ourselves—God gives nothing for miserly hoarding or for selfish use. Always we are his stewards, and are blessed ourselves in order that we may be a blessing to others. This is true of every good thing we receive. It ceases to be a good thing to us if we refuse to share it or to pass it on. This is true of our common, earthly blessings. The great law of love for our neighbor requires us to hold all we have at the call of God for human need. The love of God, which is given

to us so freely and with such infinite lavishness, blesses us only when we too become loving like God and love others as he loves us. The divine forgiveness can become ours only if we will pass it on, forgiving as we are forgiven. We can get God's comfort in our sorrow only when we are ready to give it out again, comforting others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God. Of all the great gifts and blessings that God graciously bestows upon us, not one is for ourselves alone. What we have we must give, otherwise we shall lose it.

We are always in the midst of human needs to which we should minister. It may not seem that those about us need anything that we could give them. They appear happy, and perhaps they have more than we have to make them so. But we do not know what hunger there may be in their hearts, what hidden griefs they are carrying in the midst of the sunshine which pours all about them, what burdens they are bearing of which they speak no word. At least, we should be open-hearted

and open-handed in our love toward all men, ready to serve them in any way we can, not knowing what their need may be this very moment.

"They might not need me--
Yet they might—;
I'll let my heart be
Just in sight—

"A smile so small
As mine, might be
Precisely their
Necessity."

We are required only to give what we have, not what we have not. When we stand in the presence of a want which we cannot possibly meet, we need not vex ourselves because we cannot help. The thing we really cannot do is not our duty, but some other's. We must not conclude too quickly, however, in the face of any need, that we can do nothing to meet it. Perhaps what the person seems to require is not what he really needs. It may be that we have, even among our scant stores, that which will feed his hunger or relieve his distress bet-

ter than if we could give him what he requests of us. At the Beautiful Gate of the temple Peter could not give what the beggar asked, but he did not therefore pass on to his devotions, leaving the man unhelped. What he gave, too, was really far better for the beggar than the paltry thing the man, with his inadequate thought of his need, had asked for.

Because we cannot give what our neighbor seems to need we are not therefore to give him nothing. The amount of money we have for charity is not the measure of our ability to help. Money is the poorest of all alms. A great deal of money-giving does irreparable hurt to those who receive it. It makes them less royal and noble in living. There is great harm done by indiscriminate charity, which fosters not manly self-reliance, but a weak and unmanly spirit of dependence. We do not help another wisely when we do for him the things he could have done for himself. If Peter had given money that day at the temple gate, he would only thus have enabled the lame man to live a little longer in his miserable and useless mendi-

cancy. He gave him a blessing, however, which made mendicancy no longer a necessity, since the man could now take his place among men and provide for himself.

The way we can best help others is not by ministering merely to their infirmities and weaknesses, but by putting into them courage and strength that they may take care of themselves. We may not have money to give, but there are better alms than money. If we get a discouraged man to take heart again, and to set out bravely to fight his own battles and carry his own burdens, we have done him a far greater kindness than if we had fought his battles and carried his burdens for him.

We should give then always whatever we have to give. It may be only a word of cheer; but one of the most useful men in the world is the man who gives a word of encouragement to every one he meets. His life is a perpetual benediction. Wherever he goes flowers grow in the path behind him. He does not do anything great, anything that men talk about or that is mentioned in the newspapers, yet he makes

every one he meets a little braver, stronger, and happier, and that is worth while; that is angel work. Helen Hunt Jackson wrote:

If I can live
To make some pale face brighter, and to give
A second lustre to some tear-dimmed eye,
Or e'en impart
One throb of comfort to an aching heart
Or cheer some wayworn soul in passing by;

If I can lend
A strong hand to the fallen, or defend
The right against a single envious strain,
My life, though bare,
Perhaps, of much that seemeth dear and fair
To us on earth, will not have been in vain.

The purest joy,
Most near to heaven, far from earth's alloy,
Is bidding clouds give way to sun and shine,
And 'twill be well
If on that day of days the angels tell
Of me: "She did her best for one of thine."

Henry Drummond says that we do not know what ripples of healing are set in motion when we simply smile on one another. The people

with the plainest, commonest abilities have yet something to give—let them give just what they have and it will in some way sweeten the world's bitterness, brighten its darkness, and put strength into its weakness. We need not worry over what we wish we could give but have not—that is not our duty; that is help we are not responsible for. But if we would not disappoint God and fail in our responsibility, we must always give cheerfully what we have to give.

The Ministry of Kindness

" *The memory of a kindly word*
For long gone by,
The fragrance of a fading flower
Sent lovingly,
. . . . . .
The note that only bears a verse
From God's own word —
Such tiny things we hardly count
As ministry,
The givers deeming they have shown
Scant sympathy ;
But when the heart is overwrought,
O, who can tell
The power of such tiny things
To make it well ! "

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

The Ministry of Kindness

NOTHING is more worth while than kindness. Nothing else in life is more beautiful in itself. Nothing else does more to brighten the world and sweeten other lives. Robert Louis Stevenson said in a letter to Edmund Mosse: "It is the history of our kindnesses that alone makes the world tolerable. If it were not for that, for the effect of kind words, kind looks, kind letters, multiplying, spreading, making one happy through another, and bringing forth benefits, some thirty, some fifty, some a thousandfold, I should be tempted to think our life a practical jest in the worst possible spirit."

The man whose life lacks habitual kindliness may succeed splendidly in a worldly sense. He may win his way to high honor. He may gather millions of money. He may climb to a

conspicuous place among men. But he has missed that which alone gives glory to a life—the joy and blessing of being kind. There are men who are so intent on winning the race that they have neither eye nor heart nor hand for the human needs by the wayside. Here and there is one, however, who thinks more of the humanities than of the personal success that woos him forward, and who turns aside in his busiest hour to give help and cheer to those who need.

There is always this difference in men. There are those who have only one purpose in life, the making of their own career. They fix their eye upon the goal and press toward it with indomitable persistence, utterly unheeding the calls and appeals of human need which break upon their ears. They fail altogether in love's duty. They dwarf and make as dead in themselves the qualities which are divinest in their nature. Far nobler are those who, while earnest and diligent in business, yet let the law of love rule in their lives and are ever ready to forget themselves and sacrifice their own personal interest

in order to do good to others. He who leaves love for others out of his life-plan leaves God out too, for love is the first thing in Godlikeness.

When we speak of kindness we think not so much of large things as of the little things of thoughtfulness and gentleness which one may do along the way. There are persons who now and then do some great thing of which everybody speaks, but whose common days are empty of love's personal ministries. There are men who give large sums of money to found or endow institutions, but who have scarcely ever been known to do a kindly deed to a poor man or to one in trouble or need, and who fail altogether in love's sweet spirit in their own homes and among their own companions. Is it not better that we shall have a gentle heart which will prompt us to unbroken kindliness in word and deed, than that once in a great while we should do some conspicuous act of charity, living, meanwhile, in all our common relations, a cold, selfish, unsympathetic, ungentle and loveless life?

There are men and women who have learned so well the lesson of love taught by the Master, that all along their path a ministry of kindness is wrought by them which brightens and blesses the lives of all who come within their influence. Their course through this world is like that of a river across a desert whose banks are fringed with green. Like the Master, they literally go about doing good. They have a genius for kindness. They are ever doing thoughtful little things which add to the world's sweetness and happiness.

Once in crossing a meadow I came to a spot that was filled with fragrance. Yet I could see no flowers and I wondered whence the fragrance came. At last I found, low down, close to the ground, hidden by the tall grass, innumerable little flowers growing. It was from these the fragrance came. You enter some homes. There is a rich perfume of love that pervades all the place. It may be a home of wealth and luxury, or it may be plain and bare. No matter; it is not the house, nor the furniture, nor the adornment that makes the air of

sweetness. You look closely. It is a gentle woman, mother or daughter, quiet, lowly, hiding herself away, from whose life the fragrance flows. She may not be beautiful, may not be specially well-educated, may not be musical, nor an artist, nor "clever" in any way; but wherever she moves she leaves a benediction. Her sweet patience is never disturbed by the sharp words that fall about her. The children love her because she never tires of them. She helps them with their lessons, listens to their frets and worries, mends their broken toys, makes dolls' dresses for them, straightens out their tangles, settles their little quarrels, and finds time to play with them. When there is sickness in the home she is the angel of comfort. Her face is always bright with the outshining of love. Her voice has music in it as it falls in cheerful tenderness on a sufferer's ear. Her hands are wondrously gentle as their soothing touch rests on the aching head, or as they minister in countless ways about the bed of pain.

"The lives that make the world so sweet
Are shy, and hide like humble flowers;
We pass them by with our careless feet,
Nor dream 'tis their fragrance fills the bower,
And cheers and comforts us, hour by hour."

A young woman who had passed through deep sorrows said to a friend one day, in speaking of the comfort certain persons had given her unconsciously, "I wish some people knew just how much their faces can comfort one! I often ride down in the same street-car with your father, and it has been such a help to me to sit next to him. There is something so good and strong and kind about him, it has been a comfort just to feel he was beside me. Sometimes, when I have been utterly depressed and discouraged, he has seemed somehow to know just the right word to say to me; but if he didn't talk, why, I just looked at his face, and that helped me. He probably has not the least idea of it, either, for I know him so slightly, and I don't suppose people half realize, anyway, how much they are helping or hindering others!" There is a great deal of this unconscious kind-

ness in the world. Moses wist not that his face shone. The best people are not aware of their goodness. According to the old legend, it was only when it fell behind him, where he could not see it, that the saintly man's shadow healed the sick. This is a parable. Goodness that is aware of itself has lost much of its charm. Kindnesses that are done unconsciously mean the most.

It is one of the blessings of pain or suffering that it softens hearts, and woos out gentleness and kindness. A very common experience is given in the story of a worker in one of the slums, which tells of a whole family completely changed through the influence of a deformed child who became the angel of the home. The father was a navvy, the lads were coarse and uncouth, and the mother, overworked and far from strong, had fallen into untidy habits. But there was born into that home a crippled child, and it was the means of drawing out the sympathy, love, and tenderness of the whole family. The man nursed and petted his child evenings; the boys made playthings for her,

and showed their affection in all sorts of pleasant ways; the mother kept the window clean, that her child, pillowed on the table, might look out on the court. Thus a large and blessed ministry of kindness was inspired by what seemed a misfortune. The suffering of a child transformed all the household life, making each heart gentler, sweeter, more thoughtful, more unselfish. It is often so. Many a sweet home owes most of its sweetness to a quiet, patient sufferer, whose pain has been the messenger of God to soften hearts and enrich common lives with heavenly tenderness.

One good rule of kindness is never to allow a day to pass in which some one has not been made a little happier. We fail to realize, too, how much happiness even very little things give. It may be only a word of cheer as we meet a neighbor on the street, or an inquiry at the door when one is sick, or a note of sympathy when there is trouble in the home, or a simple remembrance on a birthday or an anniversary. Such seeming trifles, costing nothing but thoughtfulness and an expression of love,

are life and cheer to those to whom they come. They make the world a sweeter place to live in. They make burdens lighter, rough paths smoother, hard toil easier, loneliness more endurable.

Whatever else we may do or may not do, we should certainly train ourselves to be kind. It may not be an easy lesson to learn, for its secret is forgetting ourselves and thinking of others—and this is always hard. But it can be learned. To begin with, there must be a gentle heart to inspire the gentle life. We must love people—if we do not, no training, no following of rules, will ever make us kind. But if the heart be full of the love of Christ, the disposition will be loving, and it will need no rules to teach the lips to speak ever gracious words and the hands to do always the things of kindness, and to do them always at the right time. Too many wait till it is too late to be kind.

Some day I meant—
When smoother ran the wheels of life,
And peace and leisure close were blent,
And all the weary toil and strife

Had given way to sweet content—
Some time I meant
To closer draw love's tendrils dear
Around my boy, and many ways
So dear to boyish hearts, to cheer
And brighten all his boyhood's days,
And bring content.

Some time, I thought
To make his life a poem rare,
Replete with noble thought and aim;
A structure great, and good and fair,
Crowned by the coronet of his fame.
I planned for naught.
For, now my leisure hours are here,
So swiftly time its changes ring,
The scenes that once had been so dear,
Have now forever taken wing.
Too late the thought.

The Ministry of Encouragement

" *Talk Happiness. The world is sad enough*
Without your woes. No path is wholly rough;
Look for the places that are smooth and clear,
And speak of these to rest the weary ear
Of earth, so hurt by one continuous strain
Of human discontent and grief and pain."

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH

The Ministry of Encouragement

NOTHING is more worth while in this world than encouragement. No mission is more divine than the encourager's. In no other way can we do more good than by going about, speaking words of cheer. In Westmeal, near Antwerp, there is a convent of Trappist monks who represent a strangely perverted conception of Christianity. There are thirty-six monks who live there together, under the vow of perpetual silence. They dress in rough sackcloth, with ropes about their waists, their heads shaven and their beards undressed. They live on bread, sour milk, and vegetables, sleep on hard boards, and spend their days in frigid and solemn silence. If a visitor speaks to one of these monks, the monk draws his cowl closer about his head and moves away. Each day he walks in the garden and

looks into a grave opened and ready for the one of the company who is first to die.

This, it is claimed, is a high ideal of Christian living. This order of monks suppose that they are illustrating in a lofty way the holiness and beauty of Christianity. But it is not such living that the New Testament teaches. Jesus Christ did not live such a life. He did not walk about in silence. He was the sunniest of men. He was ready to give cheer to all he met. He taught his followers to let their light shine on the world's darkness. He would have us hide within our hearts our cares and sufferings, and give out only blessing and gladness.

Yet there always have been those who pervert the teachings of Christ in this matter of cheerful living and make their religious life dreary and disheartening. Instead of being helpers of the faith and joy of others, they are hinderers. Instead of making others stronger for struggle, for burden-bearing, and for duty, they make it harder for them to do their part. It is reported that during the siege of Ladysmith a civilian was arrested, tried by court-martial, and sen-

tenced to a year's imprisonment for being a discourager. The man would go along the picket-lines, saying disheartening words to the men on duty. He struck no blow for the enemy. He was not disloyal to the country. But he was a discourager. It was a critical time. The fortunes of the town and its brave garrison were trembling in the balance. Instead of heartening the men on whom the defence depended and making them braver and stronger, he put faintness into their hearts and made them less courageous. The court-martial adjudged it a crime to speak disheartening words at such a time. And the court-martial was right.

There are men in every community who are continually doing the same thing. They go about everywhere as discouragers. Happy is the church which has not one or more such members on its roll. They are good people, godly and upright, perhaps active in many ways. But they never see the hopeful side of the church's life. If you talk to them of something that is encouraging, growing enthusiastic in your narration, they will come in with

their dismal "but" and dampen your ardor with questions or suppositions meant to discount your hopefulness and quench the flame of your enthusiasm. They are never known to say a word of hearty, unqualified approval of anything. There is always some fly in the ointment. The minister is a faithful man, but if he would only preach more thus and thus he would do greater good. Then he is not as faithful a pastor as he might be. The church seems to be prospering. There are many additions to it from time to time. The financial reports are good. But—there is something not altogether satisfactory. So it is with everything in the church life.

These people never imagine that they are disloyal to their spiritual home. They would do nothing to hurt the church. They think they are among its most faithful and useful members. But all the while they are making it harder for every other member they speak to to continue loyal and earnest. They are lessening the pastor's influence and robbing him of power. They are putting discouragement into

the heart of everyone they meet. Such members are real enemies of Christ. If an ecclesiastical court-martial could inflict upon them some sort of punishment which would cure them of their grievous fault it would be a blessing to many people, and the church would have reason to rejoice and thank God.

But not in churches only are discouragers found — they are everywhere. Business men meet them continually. They are always saying disheartening words. They discount all prosperity. They are prophets of evil wherever they go. The sweetest happiness has some alloy for them. If they made only themselves wretched by their miserable pessimism, there would be less need to trouble ourselves. If they persisted in being unhappy we could not help it, and if that were the end of it we might accord them the privilege without regret. But they are messengers of discouragement to everyone they meet. They stir up discontent wherever they move. Like the unhappy civilian in Ladysmith, they go among those who are carrying burdens, cares, and responsibilities, and by

their depressing talk make them less able to endure, less heroic and strong for struggle. Thus their influence works ill to their neighbors.

At some points in the Alps the guides warn tourists not to talk nor sing, nor even to whisper, lest the reverberation of their words in the air may start an avalanche from its poise on the mountain and bring it down upon the villages and homes in the valley. There are men and women who are carrying such loads of duty, anxiety, or sorrow, that the slightest addition to the weight would crush them. They are battling bravely against odds. They are holding out under great pressure, sustained by a trembling hope of getting through, at last, successfully. They are bearing up under a burden of difficulty or trouble, comforted by the expectation that in the end their darkness will turn to light. But everything is in the balance. Then along comes one of these gloomy discouragers. He has no perception of the fitness of things. He lacks that delicate, sympathetic feeling which enables men of a finer grain and a

nobler quality to enter into the experience of others and put strength into their hearts. He discovers the mood of anxiety through which his friends are passing. But instead of speaking a word of cheer to help them to be victorious, he talks in a pessimistic or disheartening way which makes their difficulties seem greater, their burdens heavier, and their sorrows altogether hopeless.

It is hard to be patient with such people, for they are really enemies of human happiness. They make life immeasurably harder for everyone they meet. They take the brightness out of the sunniest day, the blue out of the clearest sky, and something of the gladness out of the happiest heart. Then they make work harder for every toiler and pain keener for every sufferer. There ought to be a law making it a crime for one man to discourage another, and affixing severe penalties to every violation of this law.

How much better it would be if instead of being discouragers we should all learn to be encouragers of others! The value of words of

cheer is incalculable. There is an old story of a fireman who was climbing up a ladder amid smoke and flame, trying to reach a high window, to rescue a child from a burning building. The man had almost gained the window, but the heat was so intense, and the smoke so blinding, that he staggered on the ladder and seemed about to turn back. A great crowd below was watching him with breathless interest and, seeing him waver and hesitate, one man cried, "Cheer him!" The cheer nerved the fireman anew for his heroic task, and in a moment the brave fellow had entered the house and soon returned, saving the child.

It is cheer people want, not discouragement, when they are fighting a hard battle. Men who give us only their doubts and fears are misanthropists. True philanthropy brings us hope and heartening. The truest helpers of others are those who always have words of incitement and inspiration to speak, who always are encouragers.

Of a true-hearted woman, not brilliant, with no college degree, unknown in the paths of

fame, but with a gift of love, and with power to make home sweet, one wrote:

Around her childish hearts are twined,
As round some reverend saint enshrined;
And following hers the childish feet
Are led to ideals true and sweet,
And find all purity and good
In her divinest motherhood.

This sad old earth's a brighter place,
All for the sunshine of her face;
Her very smile a blessing throws,
And hearts are happier where she goes,
A gentle, clear-eyed messenger.
Go, whisper love—thank God for her!

The Word that was not Said

"*So many tender words and true*
We meant to say, dear love, to you;
So many things we meant to do.
But we forgot.

"*The busy days were full of care;*
The long night fell, and unaware
You passed beyond love's leading prayer
While we forgot.

"*Now evermore through heart and brain*
There breathes an undertone of pain;
Though what has been should be again,
We would forget."

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH

The Word that was not Said

MANY of the sins of most good people are sins of not doing. We need always to put into our prayer of penitence the confession, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done."

This is true of our sins of speech. In one of the psalms is a resolve that we all need to make—"I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." Some of us have a great deal of trouble with our tongues. We say many harsh words, perhaps bitter words which cut and sting. We may plead, as our defence of what we tell, that the things we say of others are true. But we have no right to blurt out words that give pain to another, merely because they may chance to be true.

"The ill-timed truth we should have kept,—
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?"

There is a great deal of sweet forgiveness in every true heart which has been filled with the love of Christ. The Master's emphatic lesson, that we should forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven, has been learned by many patient and gentle believers, for it must be confessed that in too many homes there is almost measureless need for forgiveness. But is it not most unjust in any one to make such demands on love, to make life so hard for one who has intrusted the heart to his keeping? Should he blame any one but himself if some day he finds that he has wearied and worn out the love which has been so patient, so long suffering, with him?

"Forgive you?—O, of course, dear,
A dozen times a week!
We women were created
Forgiveness but to speak.

"You'd die before you'd hurt me
Intentionally? . . . True.
But it is not, O dearest,
The thing you mean to do,—

"It's what you do, unthinking,
That makes the quick tear start;
The tear may be forgotten,
But the hurt stays in the heart;

"And though I may forgive you
A dozen times a day,
Yet each forgiveness wears, dear,
A little love away.

"And one day you'll be grieving,
And chiding me, no doubt,
Because so much forgiving
Has worn a great love out."

But it is possible never to treat our friends unkindly in word or act, and yet to sin grievously against them. We sin against others continually in restraining kindly speech, in withholding words which we ought to have spoken,—cheerful, encouraging, helpful words.

"The word we had not sense to say,
Who knows how grandly it had rung?"

We often think, after the opportunity has passed, of some strong, true word we might have spoken at a certain moment, but which

we did not speak. Perhaps "we had not sense" to say it. With many of us the mind works slowly, and we do not think of the fine answer we could have given or the wise word we might have uttered until it is too late. Our best thoughts ofttimes are after-thoughts, too late to be uttered, and avail us nothing.

Or the good word may have been kept in the heart unspoken, through timidity or shyness. Bashfulness is sometimes a hinderer of usefulness. We want to speak, but we cannot conquer our natural diffidence, and so the kindly or cheering words we were eager to utter lie unexpressed in our hearts, and our friend does not know that we wished to hearten or encourage or comfort him in his time of trouble or suffering.

Or it may be want of moral courage that restrains speech when we had the chance to say noble words for Christ. There is a great deal more evil wrought through moral cowardice than most of us would care to admit. We are afraid of a sneer. We are not brave enough to stand alone. We wrong our friends,

too, most of us, at times, by not speaking courageously in their defence when their character or conduct is unjustly assailed. Many of us have bitter thoughts of our own behavior when we remember how we failed one we love in an hour when he needed us to stand up for him in his absence. The word we did not say burns before our eyes in lurid characters and shames us.

There is another large class of words unspoken which count seriously against us in life's records. These are words of kindly interest and affection, which it is in our heart to say, but which find no utterance in speech. Especially in home fellowships do such silences work hurt. Perhaps we are careful never to say a word that would cause pain—if we reach this self-restraint we have attained a high ideal of Christian living. But this is only negative. Not doing people harm is not the same as doing them good. We sorely wrong our loved ones by keeping back, by holding in our hearts unspoken thoughts of love which we ought to have uttered in their ears.

There is altogether too much reserve in many friendships. We are too chary of words of commendation. It is a great thing to a child to get a word of praise for something that has been well done, some task given, some lesson set, some duty required, or even for a blundering effort that was the best the child could make. It is like wine to a weary one, toiling and struggling faithfully, though perhaps without the reward of apparent success, to have a word of appreciation and of good cheer spoken heartily and sincerely. It brightens all of one's day of task-work and puts new courage into one's heart, if in the morning thoughtful love speaks its gracious word of tenderness. Through all the hours the light shines and the song sings. Yet too many of us seem not to think of this. We love the dear ones of our home, but somehow the love is congealed in our heart and we fail to get it thawed out, and so those whom we ought to help with their burdens, cares, trials, and sorrows go unhelped by us through long dreary days and months.

"Loving words will cost but little
Journeying up the hill of life;
But they make the weak and weary
Stronger, braver for the strife.
Do you count them only trifles?
What to earth are sun and rain?
Never was a kind word wasted;
Never one was said in vain."

It will do each of us good to think seriously of our own particular habit in this regard. Do we sin against our loved ones by keeping back the words of appreciation or commendation and the expressions of affection which continually press up to the very door of our lips for utterance, and yet are withheld? Are there hearts close to us that are starving for their daily bread of love which we have to give, which it is our duty to give, but which we do not dispense? Someone says, "Children do not dream of the fire under the snow, in the reticent nature of their parents." But is it not a grievous sin against children for parents to allow the snow to cover up the fires in this way? Would it not be infinitely better if the love found a language, if the parental pride, the

enthusiasm, when beautiful things come out in the children's lives, the gladness when they do well—if these feelings and emotions were expressed? Nothing else so woos out the best in us as love does.

But it is not in homes only that we sin against others by not speaking the word we ought to speak. In all our intercourse with people there is too much of the same thoughtless and unloving reticence. We cannot lift men's heavy burdens off their shoulders, but we could make them braver and stronger to bear these burdens if we would but speak the ringing word of cheer that we might speak. Do we always do it?

A popular writer, referring to years of hard and disheartening toil in her own early life, tells of the help she got from a friend whenever she met him. He would say, "How goes it, Louisa? Keep your heart up. God bless you!" She says she always went back to her lonely room and her struggles, after meeting this friend, comforted and heartened by his cheering words. It would not cost any of

us much to form the habit of saying a bright, hopeful word to every one we meet; and we cannot know what helpfulness there would be for others in this habit.

There is never any lack of appreciative words when one is dead. Everybody comes then with some reminiscence of his kindness, some grateful expression concerning him. But that is not the right time for love's gentle thoughts to thaw out. It is too late.

"*Ah! woe for the word that is never said*
Till the ear is deaf to hear,
And woe for the lack to the fainting head
Of the ringing shout of cheer!
Ah! woe for the laggard feet that tread
In the mournful wake of the bier!

"*A pitiful thing the gift to-day*
That is dross and nothing worth,
Though if it had come but yesterday
It had brimmed with sweet the earth;
A fading rose in a death-cold hand,
That perished in want and dearth."

Things that Last

" *The smallest bark on life's tumultuous ocean*
Will leave a track behind forevermore ;
The lightest wave of influence, once in motion,
Extends and widens to the eternal shore.
We should be wary, then, who go before
A myriad yet to be, and we should take
Our bearing carefully, when breakers roar
And fearful tempests gather ; one mistake
May wreck unnumbered barks that follow in our wake."

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH

Things that Last

THERE are things that do not last. They may be beautiful to the eye, but in a moment they are gone, like the snowflake which falls on the water, sparkles for an instant, and then vanishes, leaving no trace. There are many lives running through long days and years which leave nothing to tell the story of their stay in the world. There are those who live a full lifetime and are busy all the while, and yet do nothing that will endure. There are even Christian people, St. Paul tells us, who build, too, on the only true foundation, Jesus Christ, and yet all of whose work will be burned up in the final testing. They build wood, hay, and stubble into the walls instead of gold, silver, and precious stones. They will be saved themselves, but so as by fire, all their work being burned up.

It was one of the conceits of ancient poetry that the oarsman, Charon, was permitted on one occasion to visit the earth. From a lofty mountain top he looked down upon the cities and palaces and works of man. As he went away, he said, "All these people are spending their time in just building birds' nests. No wonder they fail and are ashamed." Building birds' nests to be swept away in the floods, when they might be erecting palaces of immortal beauty to dwell in forever—thus indeed must much of the best of our life and work in this world appear to the angels who look down upon us from heaven and see things as they are.

It is unworthy of an immortal being to live thus, to spend a lifetime amid splendid opportunities, and yet leave nothing that will last. We are capable of doing things that will abide forever, and we should never be content to do anything that will not last. Nothing is worth while which is not eternal, which will not permanently enrich our own character, which will not in some way make the world better,

sweeter, happier, and which we cannot carry with us as treasure into the future life.

It is possible to live so that everything we do shall last. "Ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord," said Saint Paul. We may, in all our busy life, lay only gold, silver, and precious stones on the walls, materials which will not be consumed nor tarnished in the fire that shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. A man spends three score and ten years in lowly Christian living. He makes no success in the world, as men regard success. Yet all the while he lives honestly and faithfully in his own place. While other men are fighting for position, scrambling for preferment, thinking only of themselves, he lives devoutly toward God, unselfishly toward men and diligently in the doing of all duty. When he dies he leaves nothing behind him—no money, no property. But there is another sphere in which results are rated not by dollars, but by moral values. In this sphere a cup of cold water given to a thirsty one, in the name of Christ, will count for more than the piling up of a fortune for one's self. In this

sphere the man whose hands appear empty is rich and leaves to the world an enduring inheritance of blessing and good. Charles Kingsley tells us that

Not all who seem to fail, have failed indeed;
Not all who fail, have therefore worked in vain.

. . . . . .

There is no failure for the good and wise.
What though thy seed should fall by the wayside.
And the birds snatch it, yet the birds are fed,
Or they may bear it far across the tide
To give rich harvests after thou art dead.

One of the most picturesque sights one sees in the country is an old mill, with its water-wheel outside. The water fills the buckets, and all day long the wheel turns round and round in the sunshine. It seems to be toiling away laboriously enough but uselessly. You see nothing that it accomplishes by its ceaseless motion. But its shaft runs through the wall, and out of sight within the mill turns the stones which grind the wheat, and the bolts which prepare the flour that feeds many people. There are human lives which, with all their unresting toil, seem to be

doing nothing, and yet they project into the sphere of the unseen, and there they make benefit and good of incalculable value.

The secret of the work that lasts is that it is done in the name of Christ and that it is inspired by love. What we do for ourselves will not last. The fabric will crumble, however imposing it may be. He who writes his own name on his work is doomed to disappointment. There is no immortality for vanity and self-seeking. The glory of self-conceit is but a bubble that bursts and leaves only a wrack of froth. But what we do in love for Christ and for our fellow-men will live. One made a piece of costly embroidery, putting into it finest threads of gold and silver. Then the work was laid away for a time, and when it was looked at again the whole delicate and beautiful fabric had been destroyed — nothing was left of it but the gold and silver threads. These were bright as ever in imperishable beauty. The only threads in the web of a life which will endure are the gold and silver threads which love for Christ and love for men put in.

If men only realized and remembered this they would not spend so much of their time in doing things that will not last. Even in our religious work many of us seem to think that money is about the only thing that is worth giving. If we cannot put our name on the subscription paper, with a good sum attached, we think we are not doing anything. We need to be reminded continually that he who has been immeasurably the world's greatest benefactor gave no money, but gave instead love's service and sacrifice—gave himself.

Our capacity for usefulness is not measured by the amount of money we have to bestow. The greatest gift we can give to any cause is ourself. Indeed nothing really counts but love. Saint Paul tells us this. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal." Human eloquence is nothing, unless love be in it; there is nothing in it that abides; it is only a pleasant noise whose music dies away in the air. Saint Paul says further, "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,

. . . and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Money is nothing in God's sight if the giving of it be not inspired by love. The poor may be fed,—money will buy bread,—but in the sphere of spiritual realities, no record is kept of even the most lavish outgiving of bread and raiment for charity, if love be not the inspiring motive. Love is life, and if love be wanting, the largest benefactions are only dead works.

There is nothing greater possible that we can do in this world than to put love into a life where love is lacking. A great novelist relates of one of his characters, a nobleman, that when he walked over his estates, he carried acorns in his pocket, and when he came to a spot which seemed bare he would plant one of them, so that the dreary place might be brightened. We are forever coming upon human lives which by reason of sorrow, failure or misfortune are left bare and empty. If we carry always a heart full of love and cheer, we may drop the living seeds into these sad and lonely places, thus changing desert spots into bits of lovely gardens.

"If you were toiling up a weary hill,
Bearing a load beyond your strength to bear,
Straining each nerve untiringly, and still
Stumbling and losing foothold here and there;
And each one passing by would do so much
As give one upward lift and go his way,
Would not the slight reiterated touch
Of help and kindness lighten all the day?

"If you were breasting a keen wind which tossed
And buffeted and chilled you as you strove,
Till baffled and bewildered quite, you lost
The power to see the way, and aim, and move;
And one, if only for a moment's space,
Gave you a shelter from the blast,
Would you not find it easier to face
The storm again when the brief rest was past?"

We do not begin to know what power even very little things, if love be in them, have to put brightness and a blessing into dreary or empty lives. The memory of a kindly word stays ofttimes for years in a heart to which it brought cheer and uplift. A flower sent to a darkened room in some time of sickness or sorrow, leaves a fragrance which abides ever afterwards. A note of sympathy with its word of comfort and love is cherished as dearer than

gold or gems, and its message is never forgotten. "Love never faileth," never dies. The greatest deeds without love make no enduring record, but when love inspires them, the smallest ministries of kindness leave imperishable memories in the lives which they help and bless. It ought to be the deepest wish of every true heart to leave in this world something which will last, which will not perish amid the wastes of time, which will live in blessing and good.

"Is the world better or worse where I tread?
What have I done in the years that are dead?
What have I left in the way as I passed,—
Foibles to perish, or blessings to last?"

Jesus said of Judas that it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Judas left a terrible curse in the world instead of a benediction. That which he did made infamy for him instead of honor. No doubt the case of Judas was an extraordinary one, but there are countless others of whom the same is measurably true. It is a dreadful thing to miss a ministry of blessing in one's life, to be a tree of poisonous exhalation, like the fabled upas, in-

stead of a tree planted by the streams of water which bears its fruit in its season. It is a sad thing to live in vain, to spend one's years in doing things that are not worth while, things that will perish. We should not be content to let a single day pass in which we do not speak some gracious word or do a kindness that will add to the happiness, the hope, or the courage and strength of another life. Such ministries of love will redeem our days of toil and struggle from dreariness and earthliness, and make them radiant in God's eye and in the record they make for eternity.

"*For me—to have made one soul*
The better for my birth;
To have added but one flower
To the garden of the earth;

"*To have struck one blow for truth*
In the daily fight with lies;
To have done one deed of right
In the face of calumnies;

"*To have sown in the souls of men*
One thought that will not die—
To have been a link in the chain of life,
Shall be immortality."

Is Self-Denial a Mistake?

"Life is hard enough at best;
But the love that is expressed
Makes it seem a pathway blest
To our feet;
And the troubles that we share
Seem the easier to bear.

"Smile upon your neighbor's care,
As you greet;
Rough and stony are our ways,
Dark and dreary are our days;
But another's love and praise
Make them sweet."

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH

Is Self-Denial a Mistake?

ONE writes in a letter: "A friend of mine was speaking to me about self-denial. She does not think one ought to sacrifice one's self too much, even for one's own people. Often we find one person in a family doing things for another member of the household, waiting on her, bearing her burdens, when she is more able to do these things herself. My friend does not think it is right to wear one's self out for others. It only makes the others selfish, and they do not even thank you for it, but sit with folded hands, expecting you to continue to do and do and do for them. Please give me your opinion about this."

This question is important enough and of wide enough interest to have a thoughtful answer. The matter of self-denial for others is one of which we should think very sanely and care-

fully. Self-denial for its own sake is nothing at all. In mediæval days people thought they were pleasing God when they wore hair shirts, scourged themselves with whips, put nails or pebbles in their shoes to hurt their feet and make walking a torture, and endured all sorts of self-inflicted pains and sufferings. They supposed that this was being like Christ, and that in passing through such experiences they were proving themselves saints of a high order. The truth is, however, that the whole system was a piece of self-deception. It was abomination in God's sight. The sacrifice to which God calls us is a living sacrifice, a devotement of our life, with all its powers at their best, to him for service.

It is no better when persons voluntarily, without any call of love or duty, cause themselves suffering or loss. God does not want us to make ourselves unhappy—unhappiness is not a lovely quality, nor is it meritorious in itself, and it is not pleasing to God. Self-denial has nothing praiseworthy in it save when it is exercised in the service of love, and radiant with the spirit

of love. Alone it does no one any good and adds nothing to the world's treasure of blessing. Merely for its own sake it avails nothing. "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor . . . but have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

Self-sacrifice avails only when it is required in doing one's duty. Then it becomes beautiful. For example, if some friend is in trouble and you are called to care for him, and to endure loss, pain, and cost, in ministering to him, and do it, and do it cheerfully, that is self-sacrifice which pleases God. Jesus Christ himself showed the highest, the supreme, example of self-denial when he went to his cross in service of love for men. He did not go to the cross merely to make a spectacle before the world, doing something that would attract attention or set before men an ideal; he went there in devotion to the will of God and in love for men. It was the good Shepherd giving his life for his sheep. It was the Son of God loving and giving himself for us.

We must carefully distinguish, therefore, be-

tween self-denial as a matter of show, and self-denial in doing God's will and in the service of love. It is not the act itself that is beautiful, but the love that is in the act. There are multitudes of people who practise what they call self-denials—giving up certain indulgences on certain occasions, supposing that thus they are pleasing God, while in reality they are only playing farces in the sight of heaven and deceiving themselves.

It never is right to wear one's self out, as this writer's friend puts it, for another, unless the sacrifice is one that is required in the doing of one's duty, and one that does good. Ofttimes there is harm done by mothers, for example, in denying themselves for their children. Too many mothers, with love that is tenderer than wise, make a serious mistake, pampering their children's selfishness, self-esteem, and pride, while they sacrifice their own life in doing things for them which the children ought to do for themselves. The truest home education is not that which does everything for children, but that which teaches them to carry their own

burdens, to fight their own battles, to work out the problems of their own lives. The older sister, for example, who solves all the examples for her little sister and helps her with her lessons when she comes from school, doing the child's work for her and saving her the effort, may think she is very kind and is proving a true and helpful sister; but really, she is harming the child, robbing her of the opportunity of growing in intellectual experience and strength. The truest kindness on the part of such a sister would be to encourage, stimulate, and inspire her sister, and thus lead her to work out the examples and get the lessons for herself.

A wise man tells us that our best friend is he who makes us do our best. That is God's own way of dealing with us and of helping us. He does not do things for us, but encourages us to do them for ourselves. There is an old promise which reads, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." It does not go on to say, however, that the Lord will carry the burden for us, leaving us with no load of our own. Rather the promise is, "He shall sustain thee." That is, we may

cast our burden upon the Lord in faith and confidence, and then he will strengthen us, encourage and inspire us, and give us wisdom and grace, so that we may carry our burdens for ourselves, growing stronger meanwhile. Since this is God's way of helping us, we best show our love for our friends when we help them in the same way. Over-helping is a serious danger of all friendship. We only make less ready for real and victorious life those for whom we make everything easy.

Thoughtful readers of the Bible note in all the Lord's helping of others an economy of miracle and grace. He did not do for them anything they could do for themselves. He required them to co-operate with him, too, when he would help or heal them. The lepers were bidden to go and show themselves to the priest, and it was "as they went" that they were cleansed. The lame man was commanded to rise up and walk, and in his obedience strength came and he walked — supernaturally helped to obey. This is the law of all divine helping. We are not carried along on our way, nor are our tasks

done for us—we must walk and work, and Christ works with us. If we fail in our part, through disobedience, or indolence, or unbelief, the work is not done and the responsibility for the failure is ours, not God's.

Whatever we may say of unwise and unnecessary self-denial, however, there come times in each one's life when everything must be laid down in the self-forgetfulness of love, while we serve others in Christ's name. Christ himself did this. He loved unto the uttermost, and so must we. He gave his life for the world, and so must we. The apostles did the same when they went forth preaching and enduring persecution, most of them in the end suffering martyrdom. They stopped at no cost or sacrifice when duty called them. Every true Christian shows the same spirit when he forgets himself and lives for the helping of others. Every good deed we do costs something, is the fruit of a self-denial. It is impossible for us to live truly and worthily a single day for self alone—we must continually give up our own way, denying ourselves the indulgence of our own desires, and living to serve.

"*Love thyself last; and oh, such joy shall thrill thee,*
As never yet such selfish souls was given,
Whate'er thy lot, a perfect peace will fill thee,
And earth shall seem the ante-room of heaven."

There is no question, therefore, concerning the duty of self-denial. It is essential in a worthy life. We do not begin to live truly or to be like Christ until we begin to love, and we cannot love without denying self continually. Whatever may be our duty to our friends in the way of inciting them to bear their own burdens and do their own tasks, our heart must ever be filled with that love which seeketh not its own, and we must always be ready to serve those who need our help, regardless of the cost to ourselves. One said of another, "He is a very good man, but he does not remind me of Jesus Christ." Of another it was said, "He makes people fall in love with Jesus Christ." This was a better witness. Those only remind us of Christ who have learned to love as he loved, and to serve in self-forgetful ministry without reserve, without stint, unto the uttermost.

The Christian as a Garden-Maker

" *Go back to thy garden-plot, sweetheart!*
Go back till the evening falls!
And bind thy lilies and train thy vines,
Till for thee the Master calls.

" *Go make thy garden fair as thou canst,*
Thou workest never alone;
Perchance he whose plot is next to thine
Will see it, and mend his own."

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

The Christian as a Garden-Maker

OD must love flowers, for he has strewn the earth with them. Everywhere they grow —not only in the garden and conservatory, where they are cultivated by human hands, but in the fields, in the meadows, in the forests, on the mountains, in deep canyons, along water-courses, in all out-of-the-way places, where no gardener cares for them. Flowers growing everywhere in their season, in such profusion, tell us that God loves beauty. They tell us also of his loving thought for us, his children, in so adorning the earth which he has made to be our home. He might have made it a desert, bleak and bare, without beauty to charm our eyes; but instead he has spread loveliness everywhere.

The true ideal of life is likeness to God. God loves beauty, and we should love beauty. Ham-

ilton W. Mabie repeats a story which shows how one man at least was affected by the beautiful in nature. One day in the early spring a Scotchman was walking along the side of a mountain in Skye, when he came to a hut in which lived an old man he had known a great many years. He saw the old man with his head bowed, and his bonnet in his hand. He came up and said to him, after a bit: "I did not speak to you, Sandy, because I thought you might be at your prayers."

"Well, not exactly that," said the old man, "but I will tell you what I was doing. Every morning for forty years I have taken off my bonnet here to the beauty of the world."

Beauty wherever it is seen is a reflection of God's face, the shining of heavenly light down upon the earth. Wherever we come upon it, it should touch our hearts with a spirit of reverence. God is near; we are standing in the light of his countenance. The beauty we see everywhere in nature is the beauty of the Lord, and we should not only reverence it, but seek to get something of its charm into our own lives. Very

fitting is the prayer, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

If we are like God, we will not only love beauty and try to be beautiful in our lives and characters, but will seek also to make beauty wherever we go. We will not only love flowers, but we will endeavor to make flowers bloom wherever we can get them to grow. Everyone who has even a little patch of ground near enough to his hand should make it as beautiful as possible. Some people do this. If they have only a foot or two of soil in their yard, on the crowded city street, they will find some way to adorn it. If they have no ground where they can get something green to grow, they put boxes of soil in their windows and make them bits of garden.

Some one has said that he who makes two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before is a benefactor. Everyone who makes any spot on this earth a little more beautiful is a co-worker with God. This is one way of blessing the world which may not often be commended or enjoined in sermons or books of devotion; nevertheless,

it is a way of doing good in which everyone should have a part.

We say a man lacks taste who fails to keep in good order the patch of ground about his house, who sets out no shrubbery, plants no flowers, and does not keep his lawn neat and beautiful. But it is something worse than lack of taste—it is lack of grace. All slovenliness is sin, all untidiness, all want of cleanliness. Though one has to live in poverty, it is one's duty to make even the barest room as neat and attractive as possible.

But there are other flowers besides those which in nature are so lovely. Our hearts should be made garden spots, full of beauty and fragrance. We should plant in them the seeds of lovely things. Our heart gardens need culture. The weeds must be kept down, the soil must be made soft and arable, the fruits of the Spirit must be cultivated. We should begin our garden-making in our own lives. If we cannot make them blossom into loveliness, there is little hope that we can change any other wilderness into a garden. Some people neglect their own heart-

culture in looking after that of their neighbors.

"How fared thy garden-plot, sweetheart,
While thou sat'st on the judgment seat?
Who watered thy roses and trained thy vines,
And kept them from careless feet?

"Nay, that is saddest of all to me,—
That is saddest of all!
My vines are trailing, my roses are parched,
My lilies droop and fall."

Too many are so busy in finding weeds and briers in other people's lives that they have no time to keep the weeds and briers out of their own life gardens. Our own hearts and characters should have our first care, for they are our own responsibility and no others.

Then while looking well to our own gardens we should make at least one little corner of this world somewhat lovelier, a sweeter, better place to live in. One writes of a quiet man, that

In the desert, where he lies entombed,
He made a little garden, and left there
Some flowers that but for him had never bloomed.

If causing a blade of grass to grow where there was none before is something worth while, something that redeems a life from uselessness, how much nobler a work it is, how much more worth while it is, to put a new touch of Christ-likeness into an immortal life, or to start a blessing in a community which will stay there and multiply itself in good forever!

Lovely as flowers are wherever seen, even in greatest luxuriance, they never seem so beautiful as when they are found in desolate and dreary places. When the mountain-climber comes upon some dainty flower on a crag, surrounded by unmelting snows, he is affected almost to reverence. Humboldt tells of being deeply touched and impressed by finding a beautiful flower on the edge of the crater of Vesuvius. In a little hollow in the lava, ashes and dust had settled, and when rain had fallen there was a cupful of rich soil ready. Then a bird or the wind had borne a seed and dropped it in this bit of garden on the crater's lip, and a sweet flower grew there. No wonder the great traveller was so moved by such a glimpse of beauty in such a place.

As we go through the world, we come now and then upon human lives which seem almost utterly dreary and desolate in their condition or in their circumstances. Sorrow or sin has stripped them bare. Yet there is scarcely one such life in which we may not, if we will, cause a flower to bloom. If only we will show thoughtful sympathy, or do some gentle kindness, we will plant a spray of beauty amid the lava and ashes.

Some of us are ready always to do good and helpful things for those who already have abundance of comfort and happiness in their lives, but we are not so ready to reach out our hand to those whose lives are dreary and empty. We should remember that the most Christ-like love is that which seeks to serve and help those whom others are likely to neglect. The divinest garden work we can do is to get flowers to bloom on the edge of craters. If you know a life that is dreary, that seems utterly desolate and alone, do what you can to get a bit of bloom planted in it.

These are the lives, too, that most need our

gentle ministries. Thoughtful love discriminates, giving its best to those who have greatest lack. If we know a person for whom no other will probably care, to whom no one is likely to give attention, that is the one to whom we should especially show kindness. When one seems alone and without friends, a stranger, or shy and reserved in any company, if we would show the most Christ-like love, that is the one we should turn to with special interest.

The other evening at a Commencement there were a number of graduates, bright, happy girls. Most of them had many friends, and on this glad occasion received many tokens of love —flowers and books and other presents. Among them, however, there was one girl from a distant part of the country, an orphan, without brother or sister or any relative. Being also of a quiet, retiring disposition, she had not made many friends during her stay in the school. One lady connected with the institution, however, knowing that this Southern girl would not likely receive many tokens of interest and affection, while her classmates would be well

remembered, quietly arranged that a number of friends should send flowers and other graduation presents to her. So it came that on the happy occasion no girl in the class received more attention than she did, and thus she was made in a measure to forget her loneliness. Thoughtful love continually finds opportunity for such kindness, which means far more than when attention is shown to those who have many friends.

There is a legend of Jesus which says that as he walked away from his grave, on the morning of his resurrection, sweet flowers grew in the path behind him. The legend is true in a spiritual sense—wherever his footsteps have pressed the earth, all these nineteen centuries, flowers have sprung up—flowers of love, of kindness, of gentleness, of thoughtfulness.

We represent Christ to-day, and if we fail to make little garden spots round about us where we live and where we work, we are not fulfilling our mission, nor obeying the teaching that we should be in the world what he was in the world, repeating his life of love among men. It

costs but a little to be a true blessing to others. Selfishness does no garden-making, plants no flowers anywhere. But if we truly love Christ we will have his love in our hearts. Then we shall live not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and living thus we shall be a blessing wherever we go.

Travellers in the desert know afar off when they are approaching a well of water. They know it by the trees that grow about it. So, wherever a true friend of Christ lives, there is an oasis, a little spot of beauty, a place of fragrance.

The Virtue of Dependableness

"*Down through our crowded walks and closer air,*
O friend, how beautiful thy footsteps were!
When through the fever's heat at last they trod,
A form was with them like the Son of God.
'Twas but one step for those victorious feet
From their day's path unto the golden street;
And we who watched their walk, so bright, so brief,
Have marked this marble with our hope and grief."

—Epitaph in Derry Cathedral.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH

The Virtue of Dependableness

FTER all, the old-fashioned virtues mean the most in life and are of greatest value. Brilliance is well enough, if there be something solid and sure beneath it. It is interesting to listen to a fascinating talker, but what is it that he is saying? And who is he that is speaking so charmingly? "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal." It is not what a man says, nor what he does that measures the man—it is what he is. Achievements may be very fine, but what of the man who made the achievements? A splendid career dazzles people's eyes. When a man climbs up before his neighbors' sight until he stands on giddy heights, people are amazed. But thoughtful men, before they decide upon the real splendor of his ascent,

wish to know how he got up, whether by honest climbing or in some other way. All that the world praises as success must be tested by the question, "What of the man at the centre of it all?"

A man who can be absolutely trusted has gained life's highest rank and won life's richest prize. Nothing counts for more in a man than the quality of dependableness. Some people lack it. There are some who pass for good, and who really are good in many ways, who yet continually fail those who trust them and depend on them. There are some who are slack and careless in meeting their money obligations. It is popularly said, for example, of a certain man who does many generous things, that he cannot be depended on in the matter of paying his debts. He gives large amounts of money to benevolence. His name is never wanting on subscription papers in behalf of worthy causes. He is active in the work of the church of which he is a member. He takes part in the weekly prayer meetings and is ready, even eager, to do whatsoever his hand findeth to do in relig-

ious service. But it is known throughout the community that he is very slow in meeting his obligations, especially in paying the monthly bills of the people who serve his household with provisions and other necessaries and luxuries. It is needless to say that the man's goodness in other ways and his generosity and his devoutness suffer immeasurably and hopelessly in the opinion of others through his disregard of these money obligations and his want of dependableness in a financial way.

But there are other ways in which many people fail to be dependable. They make engagements with their friends or neighbors and do not keep them. The worst of it is, the breaking of the engagement does not appear to trouble them. They do not think of it as in any sense a moral delinquency. They make no apology to those they have disappointed and put to inconvenience. When the matter is brought to their attention, they show no regret at the annoyance their neglect has caused. They think only of their own convenience, and if for any reason it is not suitable or agreeable

to them to do what they had promised to do, the matter troubles them no further. They seem to feel no sense of obligation to any one but themselves.

There are a great many of these people. It is impossible to calculate the amount of trouble they cause to those who depend upon them and are made to suffer by their want of faithfulness. Then the effect upon their own name and reputation is most disastrous. Any one may now and then find himself justifiably unable to do what he has promised to do. He should then instantly send his explanation and express his regret. With any reasonable person this will be satisfactory. But where no explanation is given and especially where the failure is repeated again and again, it soon becomes evident that there is a flaw in the person's character. He is not a man of his word. He has no sense of the sacredness of a promise. He is not dependable.

It is no wonder that those who fail to keep their promises and live up to their engagements suffer in reputation. A good name can

be won and kept only by continued and unbroken faithfulness. It does not take long for anyone to advertise the fact that his word cannot be relied on. Those who have dealings with him may be patient with his shortcomings for a little while, but they will soon grow weary of his failures. Then they will withdraw their patronage.

There are tradesmen and business men who set out well, with excellent opportunities for success, but who, through lack of promptness and dependableness, blight their own prospects, and foredoom promising beginnings to early decay. A painter or a paperhanger promises to do the work you want on a certain day, and neither appears nor sends any explanation of his not coming. When you chide him for not keeping his word, he has some trivial excuse which he expects you to accept as sufficient reason for his failure. The dressmaker promises your gown positively by a certain day. You tell her you want to wear it that evening and she must not disappoint you. She assures you you need have no fear—it will certainly be delivered to

you in good season. But it is not delivered, and when you show your vexation, she is very sorry, but somebody failed her and she had to disappoint you. She shows no real regret and you can only make the best of it, for your garment is under way, and you cannot take it out of her hands. But you will probably not go to her with your next gown.

In the end, all such treatment of others, all such disregard of one's word, will result in the destroying of one's reputation for dependableness. People are patient, but ultimately they will cease to patronize the man who is not dependable. They cannot afford to be disappointed and put to inconvenience, and compelled to suffer loss again and again, through any man's carelessness in keeping his engagements.

The tradesman, the merchant, the professional man, the business man in any line, who keeps his word, is the one in whom people ultimately put their confidence and to whom they give their patronage. It is a splendid reputation, for example, for a store to get—that its goods

may be absolutely depended upon, that its advertisements tell the truth, that its salespeople never misrepresent anything they are trying to sell, that a child or the most simple-minded person will be as honestly dealt with as the keenest-eyed purchaser who comes in. The way for any store to get such a reputation is always to be what it wants its patrons to believe it to be.

But it is not only in business matters that dependableness is important; it is equally important in all personal relations. The Sermon on the Mount teaches us that no merely external or general observance of the law of God is enough. The commandments must be in the heart and must permeate the whole being, ruling every smallest thought, feeling, word, and act. At Oxford it used to be said of a young undergraduate, whose short life fulfilled its early promise, "See the man with the Ten Commandments in his face!" The same writing should be seen, not only in every Christian's face, but in his whole life. Good Sunday-keeping is right, but the same sacred seriousness

should mark our lives on the weekdays that follow, the same reverence for God, the same spirit of obedience. We should have the beauty of the Lord upon us in our business life and in all our relations with others, as well as when we are praying or receiving the holy communion. There is a story of a Welsh pastor, about to baptize a shoemaker, and who thus addressed the candidate, "Take care, John, that you wax the threads more carefully, that you draw the seams more closely, and that all your work is done more to the glory of the Master, to whom you now dedicate your life." That is the way religion is to show itself in our lives if we are truly and fully following Christ.

"*Not words of winning note,*
Not thoughts from life remote,
Not fond religious airs,
Not sweetly languid prayers,
Not love of sect and creeds;
Wanted—deeds."

It is well that young people should train themselves from the first, in all things to be absolutely dependable. Let them begin in early

youth to keep every engagement, however trivial it may seem, never to break a promise, though it be only for some smallest matter, never to exaggerate, never to misrepresent, never to disappoint any one's trust or confidence. A life which begins in this way and never deviates from the strictest faithfulness, will gain at last a reputation which will be worth more than the largest fortune. Better still, it will build itself up into a character strong and firm and true and abiding, beautiful with the beauty of God, and proof against temptation and all the unholy influences of the world. The lesson of dependableness is not learned, however, in a day, nor is it something which comes in a consecration meeting or in an hour of spiritual rapture—it is the work of years to get it wrought into the life, and the place where it is learned is out in the fields of duty, of struggle, of temptation. "The workshop of character is every-day life. The uneventful and commonplace hour is where the battle is lost or won."

Dean Stanley says, and his words are worthy

of being written in letters of gold:—"Give us a man, young or old, high or low, on whom we can thoroughly depend, who will stand firm when others fail—the friend faithful and true, the adviser honest and fearless, the adversary just and chivalrous; in such an one there is a fragment of the Rock of Ages."

The Art of Living with People

Herein is love—to daily sacrifice
The thing that to the bosom closest lies,
To mutely bear reproach and suffer wrong,
Nor lift the voice to show where both belong;
Nay now, nor tell it e'en to God above,—
Herein is love, indeed; herein is love.

SUSIE M. BEST.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Art of Living with People

IFE'S best school is living with people. It is there we learn our best lessons. Some one says, "It is better to live with others even at the cost of considerable jarring and friction than to live in undisturbed quiet alone." It is not ideally the easy way. It means ofttimes hurts, wrongs, injustices, many a wounding, many a heartache, many a pang. It requires self-forgetfulness, self-restraint, the giving up of one's rights many times, the overlooking of unkindnesses and thoughtlessnesses, the quiet enduring of things that it would seem no one should be required to endure from another. Nevertheless, it is immeasurably better to live with people, though it is not easy, than to live alone.

Living alone nourishes much that is not good and beautiful in human nature. It promotes

selfishness. It gives self-conceit an undue opportunity for growth and development. It permits us to do too much as we please, which is bad training for any of us; to be independent, to indulge our own tastes, feelings, and whims without limitation, without protest, since no one is near enough to us to be seriously affected. Then it deprives us of the opportunity for discipline and education which we can get only by living in daily contact with others. One can never grow into true nobleness of character, sweetness of disposition, and beauty of life, while living in solitude. As one says, "We need to have our sharp corners rubbed off, our little pet fancies punctured, and most of all to learn self-control, 'sweet reasonableness' and tolerance for other people's point of view."

Then we never can learn the lesson of love but by living with people. We may learn the theory of loving each other and be able to preach about it and write delightful essays on the subject, but that is different altogether from getting the lesson into our own lives. A man said to his pastor at the close of a year, "I have been

through the Bible five times this year." The pastor asked him quietly, "How often has the Bible been through you this year?" Only when the Bible goes through us is it to us what it is meant to be. Conning the teachings about loving each other, getting them by heart, is one thing; getting these teachings into our lives is quite another thing. The latter we can achieve only in personal contacts with others, with all sorts and conditions of men. Nothing will teach us unselfishness but the practice of unselfishness under pressure of necessity. We cannot learn patience with others save in experiences which put our patience to the test. The same is true of all the virtues and graces—they can be acquired only in practical life. Thus it is that in very many ways people are the best means of grace to us.

It is important, then, that we learn the art of living with people. It should not be hard to live with those who are sweet, gentle, patient, thoughtful, and unselfish—anybody ought to be able to get along with such pleasant people. But not all with whom we mingle are of this

class. There are disagreeable people, those who are thoughtless, uncongenial, exacting, quick-tempered, unreasonable, sensitive, and our duty of living sweetly with others includes these, too. It may help us if we will always remember, when we find it hard to get along with any one, that this is only a new lesson in loving set for us. Of course it would please us if the disagreeable person should by some process be quietly changed into sweet reasonableness and Christ-like agreeableness, so that there no longer should be any uncongeniality to fret us. But it is not probable that any such miracle will be wrought to make it easier for us to get along together. Almost certainly the task set for us must be worked out without any perceptible amelioration of conditions. The problem is ours—we must meet it. It is ours to be Christians, which means Christ-like, just where we find ourselves. Our Master had a great deal harder conditions than ours, in which to live his life, but he never once failed in the sweetness and patience of love, and he will help us to live as he did, if we will accept his help.

There is another thing for us to remember which may help us. It is not unlikely that others may find it difficult at some points, at least, to live with us. It is not impossible to believe that there are in us serious faults, uncongenial qualities, that we have disagreeable habits. Perhaps those with whom we find it hard to get along sweetly are experiencing similar difficulty in adjusting themselves to us. Not many people are entirely perfect. Most earthly saints still have in them faults or idiosyncrasies. We cannot see our own face, and we do not see ourselves just as other people see us. Someone has given this bit of advice, "When anything goes wrong, blame yourself." That is not the way we usually do,—we like to blame the other person. But it will help much in working out the problem we are considering, if we admit that the trouble may be at least partly with ourselves, partly our fault. For one thing, this will make us more patient with others. Then it will also make us more willing to try to learn the lesson set for us. The self-conceit that never confesses mistake or fault is incapable of being made better, is indeed hopeless.

The trouble with too many of us is that we are not willing to do this. We are not disposed to overlook things in others which do not fall in with our ideas of the way they should treat us. We are not willing to accord to them the rights which they claim, or to be lenient toward their uncongeniality and tolerant with their faults. We insist upon their coming up always to our requirements and doing only the things that please us. A little honest thought will show us that this is not the Christly way. Instead of insisting that others should think always of him and minister to his comfort, our Master put it the other way and sought rather to minister to them instead. It is worth our while to think this out for ourselves.

If we would learn the lesson of living together we must exercise love. In one of Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst's little books * there is a chapter on love as a lubricant. The author relates this incident: One day there was a workman aboard a trolley car, and he noticed that every time the door was pushed open it squeaked. Rising from

* The Sunny Side of Christianity.

his seat, he took a little can from his pocket, let fall a drop of anti-irritant on the offending spot, and sat down again, quietly remarking, "I always carry an oil-can in my pocket, for there are so many squeaky things that a drop of oil will correct."

The application of the incident is obvious. In human society there are continual contacts of life with life, and there cannot but be frictions ofttimes which will surely develop unpleasantly unless they are relieved in some way. Here it is that the oil-can comes in well. A drop or two of its efficacious contents will work wonders in even the most obstinate cases.

There is a great deal of human nature in most people. This leads us to want to have our own way regardless of the rights and the feelings of others. But when two persons are trying to live together, and each is set on having things just as he wants to have them, there is sure to be clashing. It is then that the gentle ministry of the oil-can will prove beneficent in allaying friction and preventing unkindly or unseemly contacts. The ideal way in such cases is for both

parties to be not only tolerant and patient, but ready to yield rather than have strife. Sometimes, however, one of the two must do the larger part of the yielding, and exercise all the necessary tolerance and patience, if unhappy friction is to be avoided. Of course this is not just, if the law of the equities is to be followed. Yet it is the part of love always to be ready to give up its rights, even if the other person will not. He loves most and is most like the Master who takes the larger share in yielding, and does it sweetly and cheerfully.

Some good people are ready to claim that there is a limit to our duty of giving up. But not many of us are in danger of going too far in this phase of loving. We need only to recall the Master's teaching about turning the other cheek and letting the relentless litigant have our cloak as well as the coat he demands, and then to remember also the Master's own example of giving up and submitting to wrong and injustice, in order to find what the law of love really means. St. Paul also counsels Christians as far as in them lies to live peaceably with all men,

of course including the quarrelsome. He tells us too that the servant of the Lord must not strive, that is, must not be contentious, but must be gentle unto all men. Then, in that match less picture of love which is a New Testament classic, we are taught that love suffereth long and is kind, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, taketh no account of evil. The ideal way for two to live together, however, implies two oil-cans—neither person disposed to quarrel, both willing to give up. But though others may not be disposed to patience and forbearance, we are responsible only for ourselves, and we must love on and our patience must not fail, whatever the conditions are. There are few people so hard to get along with that we cannot live peaceably with them, if only our own heart is full of patient love.

One of our Lord's beatitudes is, "Blessed are the peacemakers." This applies not only in our personal relations, but also in our influence upon those about us. We see a man now and then who, without being officious or a meddler in other people's affairs, is always dropping oil

in most timely fashion on "squeaky things." When he meets a friend who is excited, he says a gentle word which acts like a charm in quieting him. When one complains to him of a slight or an injury received, he allays the hurt feeling by suggesting the Christly way of looking at it. Wherever he goes he is a peacemaker. He carries in his own life an influence which makes men ashamed of unlovingness and inspires them with the desire to live sweetly and in patient love.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND

"He Maketh Me to Lie Down"

Here and here alone
Is given thee to suffer for God's sake.
In the other world we shall more perfectly
Serve him and love him, praise him, work for him,
Grow near and nearer him with all delight;
But then we shall not any more be called
To suffer, which is our appointment here.
Canst thou not suffer, then, one hour, or two?

H. E. H. King.

IFE is not all activity, work, service. Sometimes our first and highest duty is to rest. We are not to be forever pressing on, although the way is long and the sun is sinking toward the west. Sometimes we must stop and lie down awhile. We do not care to lie down. We would rather keep on our way. We are loath to tarry. We think we would be losing time if we turned aside into the shade of a great tree and rested an hour.

It seems to us that every minute that is not filled with activities is a minute wasted. We have not learned that we may serve by standing and waiting, and that at times we make greater advances by lying down than we could have done by pressing on. So we too often chafe when we are not permitted to hasten forward.

Then the Shepherd makes us lie down. It ought to be quite reason enough to silence all demurring and all question, and to make us altogether acquiescent, that it is our Good Shepherd who bids us lie down to rest awhile. He knows what is best. He never wishes us to waste time or to be loiterers. We may trust his goodness and wisdom, whatever he would have us do. If rushing on were our duty for the hour, he would not call us to rest.

Henry Drummond says, "To be willing, is a rarer grace than to be doing the will of God. For he who is willing may sometimes have nothing to do, and must only be willing to wait; and it is easier far to be doing God's will than to be willing to have nothing to do;

it is easier far to be working for Christ than it is to be willing to cease working. There is nothing rarer in the world to-day than the truly willing soul, and there is nothing more worth coveting than the will to do God's will."

We need not trouble ourselves, therefore, to seek to know why the Good Shepherd wants us to lie down. His will should satisfy us, and we need not give a moment's thought beyond that to find out why. Yet we can think of reasons. We may need rest, even though we do not think we do. We are swept on by our earnestness and our enthusiasm, and when we are not aware of it our strength is gone. The best thing we can do then is to stop to rest until our exhausted energies are renewed.

God has mercifully provided resting places along the way. What would we do if there were no nights set in like quiet valleys between our busy days? The Sabbaths, too, tell of the divine gentleness toward us in ordering a day of rest after six days of toil. Those who decline and miss this Sabbath mercy of God, do not

know how they are robbing their own lives of blessing and good. Were it not for the rests provided along the way we never could hold out to the end.

Sometimes also the Good Shepherd makes us lie down that he may feed and nourish us. Once the Master said to his disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while," and the reason given was that there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. No doubt many earnest Christian people need now and then to be made to lie down in order that they may find leisure to eat. This is true ofttimes in a physical sense. There are men who are so driven by the pressure of business that they fail to find time to provide for their bodily wants. At length nature exacts the penalty and those who might have lived on for many years, if they had learned the secret of conserving their strength, are laid aside in the midst of their years and their usefulness. It is needful for our bodily health that we lie down at proper times.

Then the same is true in spiritual life. Some of us think that we would sin if we were to rest even a few hours in our busy weeks. We have so cultivated our feeling of responsibility for the helping of others that it seems to us we should never rest even for a moment because on every hand human need and sorrow beckon and wait. But we forget that we must take time to feed ourselves and to keep ourselves strong, if we would continue to help others. We forget that we need to receive before we can give, to be blessed before we can be a blessing, to be taught before we can teach. The busy day that does not get its quiet time with the Master has been a lost day.

"Have you and I to-day
Stood silent as with Christ, apart from joy, or fray
Of life, to see his face;
To look, if but a moment, on its grace,
And grow by brief companionship, more true,
More nerved to lead, to dare, to do
For him at any cost? Have we to-day
Found time, in thought, our hand to lay
In his, and thus compare
His will with ours, and wear

The impress of his wish? Be sure
Such contact will endure
Throughout the day; will help us walk erect
Through storm and flood; detect
Within the hidden life sin's dross, its stain;
Revive a thought of love for him again;
Steady the steps which waver; help us see
The footpath meant for you, and me."

Whenever the Good Shepherd makes us lie down we may know it is in order that he may give us some new blessing. This is true, for example, when he leads us into a sick-room and draws the curtains upon us. He does not intend the days or weeks we spend there to be wasted. The work we do on our worldly affairs is not by any means the only work of life, or the most important. We are not here merely to plow and sow and reap, to build houses or bridges, to keep books or set types, to navigate ships or to make money. These occupations are right enough, and we should be diligent in our calling, whatever it is. But we are here to grow into men and women, to be fashioned into the likeness of Christ, to learn to do the will of God. When we are called away from our

common occupation for a longer or a shorter time, it is doubtless because there is something that needs to be done in us, something that is more important than the pieces of work outside, which we would do if we were to continue uninterruptedly at our tasks.

If we would remember this always when we are made to lie down, it would help us to be patient and joyously obedient. There is a blessing waiting for us in the quiet room into which we are led. There is a lesson set for us which we are now to learn. As a song bird is shut up in a dark place to learn a new song which it could not have learned in the light, so in our withdrawal into the shadow we are to be taught some new sweet song in the night which we may sing ever after in the ears of sad and weary ones. And no price is too great to pay for the privilege of learning to sing even a single note which will bless the world. No sorrow is too great to endure if it reveals to us some new beauty in Christ or brings out in us some new feature of Christ-likeness.

Or it may be to get to know our Master better

that we are called away for a time from our rushing life. A good man who had been at home for several weeks sick said that he was compensated by the opportunity he had had of getting acquainted with his wife and children. This is rich compensation, indeed, for love is better than money. Best of all friends is Jesus Christ, and it is worth our while to drop all our tasks for a time to get into closer, sweeter, more intimate friendship with him.

It would be well for us if we were to cultivate more diligently the quiet, restful spirit. Peace is one of the great key-words of the Christian life, and peace means restfulness, reposefulness, the absence of all care and anxiety, and self-mastery which restrains all inordinate ambition. The man who has not learned to be quiet and to rest without fretting and chafing, has not yet found the secret of peace. There are many who are never happy unless they are in the whirl of business or of gayety, or of the world's strife. Far more really happy is he who has learned to sit down amid the beauties of nature and find enjoyment in flowers and bird-songs. John Vance Cheney says,

I would rather be
In the shade of a tree,
With a song and a handful of daisies,
Than be the darling of victory,
'Mid the bray of the rabble's praises.

I would rather ride
On the wings inside,
Whither hoofs and horns come not after,
Than take to me Fame for a bride,
Rouged Fame, with her leer and her laughter.

We should not overlook the fact that the place in which the Good Shepherd makes us lie down is in green pastures. It is not on the dusty roadway, nor in the bleak desert, nor on the cold mountain-top, but where there is abundance of provision. Anywhere is a bit of God's green pasture to one who loves Christ and is called to suffer or to wait apart. It may be a sick-room, or a little white cot in a hospital, or some lonely place to which human love does not find the way—if our eyes are opened we shall see the greenness and the beauty all about us, wherever it is.

Life would come to mean a great deal more to us if we would learn to take it more leisurely.

We are under such pressure all the time that we do all our work in a feverish way, that we are never quiet and still even for an hour. We make such a clatter in our rushing haste that we cannot hear the voice of gentle stillness in which God speaks to us. We hurry so that we find no time to think, to meditate, to get acquainted with our Master, to allow the sweet influences of the divine love to steal into our hearts. The secret of John's wonderful transformation was his lying on the bosom of Jesus, but we have no time these crowded days for lying down even in such a holy and sacred place. If only we would take time for communing with good people, for friendship with Christ, for thought, for looking into the face of God, it would change everything for us.

"If I had the time to find a place
And sit me down full face to face
With my better self that stands no show
In my daily life that rushes so;
It might be then I would see my soul
Was stumbling still toward the shining goal;
I might be nerved by the thought sublime;
If I had the time!"